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HISTORY OF DAVID GRIEVE

THE
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VOL. II.



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THE HISTORY
OF
DAVID GRIEVE

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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BOOK II

YOUTH (continued)

CHAPTER VII

ON the following night David walked into the Parlour about eight o'clock, hung up his hat with the air of an emperor, and looked round for Daddy.

'Look here, Daddy! I've got something to say to you, but not down here: you'll be letting out my private affairs, and I can't stand that.'

'Well, come upstairs, then, you varmint! You're a poor sort of fellow, always suspecting your friends. Come up—come up with you! I'll humour you!'

And Daddy, bursting with curiosity, led the way upstairs to Dora's sitting-room. Dora was moving about amid a mass of silks, which lay carefully spread out on the table, shade melting into shade, awaiting their transference to a new silk case she had been busy upon.

As the door opened she looked up, and when she saw David her face flushed all over.

Daddy pushed the lad in.

'Dora, he's got some news. Out with it, sir!'

And he stood opposite the young fellow, on tiptoe, quivering with impatience.

David put both hands in his pockets, and looked out upon them, radiant.

‘I think,’ he said slowly, ‘I’ve scotched old Purcell this time. But perhaps you don’t know what he’s been after?’

‘Lucy was in here last night,’ said Dora, hesitating; ‘she told me about it.’

‘Lucy!’ cried Daddy, exasperated. ‘What have you been making secrets about? I’ll have no secrets from me in this house, Dora. Why, when Lucy tells you something important, is it all hidden up from me? Nasty close ways!’

And he looked at her threateningly.

Nothing piqued the old Bohemian so much as the constant assumption of the people about him that he was a grown-up baby, of no discretion at all. That the assumption was true made no difference whatever to the irritating quality of it.

Dora dropped her head a little, but said nothing. David interposed:

‘Well, now *I’ll* tell you all about it.’

His tone was triumph itself, and he plunged into his story. He described what Purcell had meant to do, and how nearly he had done it. In a month, if the bookseller had had his way, his young rival would have been in the street, with all his connection to make over again. At the moment there was not another corner to be had, within David’s means, anywhere near

the centre of the town. It would have meant a completely fresh beginning, and temporary ruin.

But he had gone to Ancrum. And Ancrum and he had bethought them of the rich Unitarian gentleman who had been David's sponsor when he signed his agreement.

There and then, at nine o'clock at night, Ancrum had gone off to Higher Broughton, where the good man lived, and laid the case before him. Mr. Doyle had taken the night to think it over, and the following morning he had paid a visit to his lawyer.

'He and his wife thought it a burning shame, he told Mr. Ancrum; and, besides, he's been buying up house property in Manchester for some time past, only we couldn't know that—that was just luck. He looked upon it as a good chance both for him and for me. He told his lawyer it must be all settled in three hours, and he didn't mind the price. The lawyer found out that Purcell was haggling, went in to win, put the cash down, and here in my pocket I've got the fresh agreement between me and Mr. Doyle—three months' notice on either side, and no likelihood of my being turned out, if I want to stay, for the next three or four years. Hurrah!'

And the lad, quite beside himself with jubilation, raised the blue cap he held in his hand, and flung it round his head. Dora stood and looked at him, leaning lightly against the table, her arms behind her. His triumph carried her away; her lips parted in a joyous

smile; her whole soft, rounded figure trembled with animation and sympathy.

As for Daddy, he could not contain himself. He ran to the top of the stairs, and sent a kitchen-boy flying for a bottle of champagne.

‘Drink, you varmint, drink!’ he said, when the liquor came, ‘or I’ll be the death of you! Hold your tongue, Dora! Do you think a man can put up with temperance drinks when his enemy’s smitten hip and thigh? Oh, you jewel, David, but you’ll bring him low, lad—you’ll bring him low before you’ve done—promise me that. I shall see him a beggar yet, lad, shan’t I? Oh, nectar!’

And Daddy poured down his champagne, apostrophising it and David’s vengeance together.

Dora looked distressed.

‘Father—Lucy! How can you say such things?’

‘Lucy—eh?—Lucy? She won’t be a beggar. She’ll marry; she’s got a bit of good looks of her own. But, David, my lad, what was it you were saying? How was it you got wind of this precious business?’

David hesitated.

‘Well, it was Miss Purcell told me,’ he said. ‘She came to see me at my place last evening.’

He drew himself together with a little nervous dignity, as though foreseeing that Daddy would make remarks.

‘Miss Purcell!—what, Lucy?—*Lucy*? Upon my word, Davy! Why, her father’ll wring her neck

when he finds it out. And she came to warn you?’

Daddy stood a moment taking in the situation, then, with a queer grin, he walked up to David and poked him in the ribs.

‘So there were passages—eh, young man—when you were up there?’

The young fellow straightened himself, with a look of annoyance.

‘Nothing of the sort, Daddy; there were no passages. But Miss Lucy’s done me a real friendly act, and I’d do the same for her any day.’

Dora had sat down to her silks again. As David spoke she bent closely over them, as though the lamp-light puzzled her usually quick perception of shade and quality.

As for Daddy, he eyed the lad doubtfully.

‘She’s got a pretty waist and a brown eye, Davy, and she’s seventeen.’

‘She may be for me,’ said David, throwing his head back and speaking with a certain emphasis and animation. ‘But she’s a little brick to have given me notice of this thing.’

The warmth of these last words produced more effect on Daddy than his previous denials.

‘Dora,’ he said, looking round—‘Dora, do you believe the varmint? All the same, you know, he’ll be for marrying soon. Look at him!’ and he pointed a thin theatrical finger at David from across the room.

‘When I was his make I was in love with half the girls in the place. Blue eyes here—brown eyes there—nothing came amiss to me.’

‘Marrying!’ said David, with an impatient shrug of the shoulders, but flushing all over. ‘You might wait, I think, till I’ve got enough to keep one on, let alone two. If you talk such stuff, Daddy, I’ll not tell you my secrets when there are any to tell.’

He tried to laugh it off; but Dora’s grey eye, glancing timidly round at him, saw that he was in some discomfort. There was a bright colour in *her* cheek too, and her hand touched her silks uncertainly.

‘Thank you for nothing, sir,’ said Daddy, unabashed. ‘Trust an old hound like me for scenting out what he wants. But, go along with you! I’m disappointed in you. The young men nowadays have got no *blood*! They’re made of sawdust and brown paper. The world was our orange, and we sucked it. Bedad, we did! But *you*—cold-blooded cubs—go to the devil, I tell you, and read your Byron!’

And, striking an attitude which was a boisterous reminiscence of Macready, the old wanderer flung out the lines:

‘Alas! when mingling souls forget to blend,

Death hath but little left him to destroy.

Ah! happy years! Once more, who would not be a boy?’

David laughed out. Daddy turned petulantly away, and looked out of window. The night was dreary, dark, and wet.

‘Dora!’

‘Yes, father.’

‘Manchester’s a damned dull hole. I’m about tired of it.’

Dora started, and her colour disappeared in an instant. She got up and went to the window.

‘Father, you know they’ll be waiting for you downstairs,’ she said, putting her hand on his shoulder. ‘They always say they can’t get on without you on debating nights.’

‘Stuff and nonsense!’ said Daddy, throwing off the hand. But he looked mollified. The new reading-room was at present his pet hobby; his interest in the restaurant proper had dropped a good deal of late, or so Dora’s anxiety persuaded her.

‘It’s quite true,’ said David. ‘Go and start ’em, Daddy, and I’ll come down soon and cut in. I feel as if I could speak the roof off to-night, and I don’t care a hang about what! But first I’ve got something to say to Miss Dora. I want to ask her a favour.’

He came forward smiling. She gave him a startled look, but her eyes—poor Dora!—could not light on him now without taking a new brightness. How well his triumph sat on him! How crisply and handsomely his black hair curled above his open brow!

‘More secrets,’ growled Daddy.

‘Nothing of any interest, Daddy. Miss Dora can tell you all about it, if she cares. Now go along! Start ’em on the Bishop of Peterborough and the Secularists. I’ve got a lot to say about that.’

He pushed Daddy laughingly to the door, and came back again to where Dora was once more grappling with her silks. Her expression had changed again. Oh ! she had so many things to open to him, if only she could find the courage.

He sat down and looked at a bit of her embroidery, which lay uncovered beside her on the frame.

‘ I say, that is fine work ! ’ he said, wondering. ‘ I hope you get well paid for it, Miss Dora. You ought. Well, now, I do want to ask your advice. This business of the house has set me thinking about a lot of things.’

He lay back in his chair, with his hands in his pockets, and threw one leg over the other. He was in such a state of nervous excitement, Dora could see, that he could hardly keep himself still.

‘ Did I ever tell you about my sister ? No, I know I haven’t. I’ve kept it dark. But now I’m settled I want to have her to live with me. There’s no one but us two, except the old uncle and aunt that brought us up. I must stick to her—and I mean to. But she’s not like other girls. She’s a queer one.’

He stopped, frowning a little as the recollections of Louie rushed across him, seeking for words in which to draw her. And directly he paused, Dora, who had dropped her silks again in her sudden astonishment, burst into questions. How old was his sister ? Was she in Manchester ? Had she a trade ? Her soul was full of a warm, unexpected joy, her manner was eager—receptive. He took up his parable and told the

story of his childhood and Louie's at the farm. His black eye kindled as he looked past Dora into the past—into the bosom of the Scout. Owing partly to an imaginative gift, partly to his reading habit, when he was stimulated—when he was, as it were, talking at large, trying to present a subject as a whole, to make a picture of it—he rose into ways of speech quite different from those of his class, and different from his own dialect of every day. This latent capacity for fine expression was mostly drawn out at this time by his attempts at public speaking. But to-night, in his excitement, it showed in his talk, and Dora was bewildered. Oh, how clever he was! He talked like a book—just like a book. She pushed her chair back from the silks, and sat absorbed in the pleasure of listening, environed too by the happy thought that he was making a friend of her, giving her—plain, insignificant, humble Dora Lomax—his confidence.

As for him, the more he talked the more he enjoyed talking. Never since he came to Manchester had he fallen into such a moment of unburdenment, of intimacy, or something like it, with any human being. He had talked to Ancrum and to John. But that was quite different. No man confides in a woman as he confides in a man. The touch of difference of sex gives charm and edge, even when, as was the case here, the man has no thrill whatever in his veins, and no thought of love-making in his head.

‘You must have been very fond of your sister,’ Dora

said at last, tremulously. 'You two all alone—and no mother.'

Somehow the soft sentiment in her words and tone struck him suddenly as incongruous. His expression changed.

'Oh, I don't know,' he said, with a sort of laugh, not a very bright one. 'Don't you imagine I was a pattern brother; I was a brute to her lots of times. And Louie—ah, well, you'll see for yourself what she's like; she's a queer customer sometimes. And now I'll tell you what I wanted to ask you, Miss Dora. You see, if Louie comes it won't do for her to have no employment, after she's had a trade all day; and she won't take to mine—she can't abide books.'

And he explained to her his perplexities—the ebbing of the silk trade from Manchester, and so on. He might hire a loom, but Louie would get no work. All trades have their special channels, and keep to them.

So it had occurred to him, if Louie was willing, would Dora take her as an apprentice, and teach her the church work? He would be quite ready to pay for the teaching; that would be only fair.

'Teach her my work!' cried Dora, instinctively drawing back. 'Oh, I don't think I could.'

He coloured, and misunderstood her. In a great labour-hive like Lancashire, with its large and small industries, the native ear is very familiar with the jealous tone of the skilled worker, threatened with competition in a narrow trade.

‘I didn’t mean any offence,’ he said, with a little stiffness. ‘I don’t want to take the bread out of anybody’s mouth. If there isn’t work to be had, you’ve only to say so, Miss Dora.’

‘Oh, I didn’t mean that,’ she cried, wounded in her turn. ‘There’s plenty of work. At the shop last week they didn’t know what to do for hands. If she was clever at it, she’d get lots of work. But ——’

She laid her hand on her frame lovingly, not knowing how to explain herself, her gentle brows knitting in the effort of thought.

Her work was so much more to her than ordinary work paid for in ordinary coin. Into these gorgeous altar-cloths, or these delicate wrappings for chalice and paten, she stitched her heart. To work at them was prayer. Jesus, and His Mother, and the Saints: it was with them she communed as her stitches flowed. She sat in a mystic, a heavenly world. And the silence and solitude of her work made one of its chief charms. And now to be asked to share it with a strange girl, who could not love it as she did, who would take it as hard business—never to be alone any more with her little black book and her prayers!

And then she looked up, and met a young man’s half-offended look, and a shy, proud eye, in which the nascent friendship of five minutes before seemed to be sinking out of sight.

‘Oh yes, I will,’ she cried. ‘Of course I will. It

just sounded a bit strange to me at first. I've been so used to be alone always.'

But he demurred now—wished stiffly to take back his proposal. He did not want to put upon her, and perhaps, after all, Louie would have her own notions.

But she could not bear it, and as he retreated she pressed forward. Of course there was work. And it would be very good for her, it would stir her up to take a pupil; it was just her old-maidish ways—it had startled her a bit at first.

And then, her reserve giving way more and more as her emotion grew, she confessed herself at last completely.

'You see, it's not just *work* to me, and it's not the money, though I'm glad enough for that; but it's for the church; and I'd live on a crust, and do it for nothing, if I could!'

She looked up at him—that ardent dream-life of hers leaping to the eyes, transforming the pale face.

David sat silent and embarrassed. He did not know what to say—how to deal with this turn in the conversation.

'Oh, I know you think I'm just foolish,' she said, sadly, taking up her needle. 'You always did; but I'll take your sister—indeed I will.'

'Perhaps you'll turn her your way of thinking,' said David, with a little awkward laugh, looking round for his hat. 'But Louie isn't an easy one to drive.'

'Oh, you can't drive people!' cried Dora, flushing;

‘you can’t, and you oughtn’t. But if Father Russell talked to her she might like him—and the church. Oh, Mr. Grieve, won’t you go one Sunday and hear him—won’t you—instead of——’

She did not finish her sentence, but David finished it for her: ‘Instead of going to the Hall of Science? Well, but you know, Miss Dora, I being what I am, I get more good out of a lecture at the Hall of Science than I should out of Father Russell. I should be quarrelling with him all the time, and wanting to answer him.’

‘Oh, you couldn’t,’ said Dora eagerly, ‘he’s so good, and he’s a learned man—I’m sure he is. Mr. Foss, the curate, told me they think he’ll be a bishop some day.’

‘All the better for him,’ said David, unmoved. ‘It don’t make any difference to me. No, Miss Dora, don’t you fret yourself about me. Books are my priests.’

He stood over her, his hands on his sides, smiling.

‘Oh, no!’ cried Dora, involuntarily. ‘You mustn’t say that. Books can’t bring us to God.’

‘No more can priests,’ he said, with a sudden flash of his dark eyes, a sudden dryness of his tone. ‘If there is a God to bring us to—prove me that first, Miss Dora. But it’s a shame to say these things to you—that it is—and I’ve been worrying you a deal too much about my stupid affairs. Good night. We’ll talk about Father Russell again another time.’

He ran downstairs. Dora went back to her frame,

then pushed it away again, ran eagerly to the window, and pulled the blind aside. Down below in the lighted street, now emptying fast, she saw the tall figure emerge, saw it run down the street, and across St. Mary's Gate. She watched it till it disappeared; then she put her hands over her face, and leant against the window-frame weeping. Oh, what a sudden descent from a moment of pure joy! How had the jarring note come? They had been put wrong with each other; and perhaps, after all, he would be no more to her now than before. And she had seemed to make such a leap forward—to come so near to him.

‘Oh! I’ll just be good to his sister,’ she said to herself drearily, with an ache at her heart that was agony.

Then she thought of him as he had sat there beside her; and suddenly in her pure thought there rose a vision of herself in his arms, her head against his broad shoulder, her hand stealing round his neck. She moved from the window and threw herself down in the darkest corner of the room, wrestling desperately with what seemed to her a sinful imagination. She ought not to think of him at all; she loathed herself. Father Russell would tell her she was wicked. He had no faith—he was a hardened unbeliever—and she could not make herself think of that at all—could not stop herself from wanting—*wanting* him for her own, whatever happened.

And it was so foolish too, as well as bad; for

he hadn't an idea of falling in love with anybody—anyone could see that. And she who was not pretty, and not a bit clever—it was so likely he would take a fancy to her! Why, in a few years he would be a big man, he would have made a fortune, and then he could take his pick.

‘Oh! and Lucy—Lucy would *hate* me.’

But the thought of Lucy, instead of checking her, brought with it again a wild gust of jealousy. It was fiercer than before, the craving behind it stronger. She sat up, forcing back her tears, her whole frame tense and rigid. Whatever happened he would *never* marry Lucy! And who could wish it? Lucy was just a little, vain, selfish thing, and when she found David Grieve wouldn't have her, she would soon forget him. The surging longing within refused, proudly refused, to curb itself—for Lucy's sake.

Then the bell of St. Ann's slowly began to strike ten o'clock. It brought home to her by association one of the evening hymns in the little black book she was frequently accustomed to croon to herself at night as she put away her work:

O God who canst not change nor fail,
Guiding the hours as they roll by,
Brightening with beams the morning pale,
And burning in the mid-day sky!

Quench thou the fires of hate and strife,
The wasting fever of the heart;
From peril guard our feeble life,
And to our souls thy peace impart.

The words flowed in upon her, but they brought no comfort, only a fresh sense of struggle and effort. Her Christian peace was gone. She felt herself wicked, faithless, miserable.

Meanwhile, in the stormy night outside, David was running and leaping through the streets, flourishing his stick from side to side in cut and thrust with an imaginary enemy whenever the main thoroughfares were left behind, and he found himself in some dark region of warehouses, where his steps echoed, and he was king alike of roadway and of pavement.

The wind, a stormy north-easter, had risen since the afternoon. David fought with it, rejoiced in it. After the little hot sitting-room, the stinging freshness, the rough challenge of the gusts, were delicious to him. He was overflowing with spirits, with health, with exultation.

As he thought of Purcell he could hardly keep himself from shouting aloud. If he could only be there to see when Purcell learnt how he had been foiled! And trust Daddy to spread a story which would certainly do Purcell no good! No, in that direction he felt that he was probably safe from attack for a long time to come. Success beckoned to him; his enemy was under foot; his will and his gifts had the world before them.

Father Russell indeed! Let Dora Lomax set him on. His young throat filled with contemptuous laughter. As a bookseller, *he* knew what the clergy read, what they had to say for themselves. How much longer could

it go on, this solemn folly of Christian superstition? 'Just give us a good Education Bill, and we shall see!'

Then, as he fell thinking of his talk with Dora and Lomax, he wished impatiently that he had been even plainer with Daddy about Lucy Purcell. With regard to her he felt himself caught in a tangled mesh of obligation. He must, somehow, return her the service she had done him. And then all the world would think he was making up to her and wanted to marry her. Meanwhile—in the midst of real gratitude, a strong desire to stand between her and her father, and much eager casting about for some means of paying her back—his inner mind was in reality pitilessly critical towards her. Her overdone primness and neatness, her fashionable frocks, of which she was so conscious, her horror of things and people that were not 'nice,' her contented ignorance and silly chattering ways—all these points of manner and habit were scored against her in his memory. She had become less congenial to him rather than more since he knew her first. All the same, she was a little brick, and he would have liked one minute to kiss her for her pluck, make her some lordly present, and the next—never to see her again!

In reality his mind at this moment was filling with romantic images and ideals totally remote from anything suggested by his own everyday life. A few weeks before, old Barbier, his French master, had for the first time lent him some novels of George Sand's.

David had carried them off, had been enchanted to find that he could now read them with ease and rapidity, and had plunged straightway into the new world thus opened to him with indescribable zest and passion. His Greek had been neglected, his science laid aside. Night after night he had been living with Valentine, with Consuelo, with Caroline in 'Le Marquis de Villemer.' His poetical reading of the winter had prepared the way for what was practically his first introduction to the modern literature of passion. The stimulating novelty and foreignness of it was stirring all his blood. George Sand's problems, her situations, her treatment of the great questions of sex, her social and religious enthusiasms—these things were for the moment a new gospel to this provincial self-taught lad, as they had been forty years before to the youth of 1830. Under the vitalising touch of them the man was fast developing out of the boy; the currents of the nature were setting in fresh directions. And in such a mood, and with such preoccupations, how was one to bear patiently with foolish, friendly fingers, or with uncomfortable thoughts of your own, pointing you to *Lucy Purcell*? With the great marriage-night scene from 'Valentine' thrilling in your mind, how was it possible to think of the prim self-conceit, the pettish temper and mincing airs of that little person in Half Street without irritation?

No, no! *The unknown, the unforeseen!* The young man plunged through the rising storm, and through the sleety rain, which had begun to beat upon

him, with face and eyes uplifted to the night. It was as though he searched the darkness for some form which, even as he looked, began to take vague and luminous shape there.

Next morning Daddy, in his exultation, behaved himself with some grossness towards his enemy. About eleven o'clock he became restless, and began patrolling Market Place, passing every now and then up the steps into the narrow passage of Half Street, and so round by the cathedral and home. He had no definite purpose, but 'have a squint at 'Tom,' under the circumstances, he must, some way or other.

And, sure enough, as he was coming back through Half Street on one of his rounds, and was within a few yards of Purcell's window, the bookseller came out with his face set in Daddy's direction. Purcell, whose countenance, so far as Daddy could see at first sight, was at its blackest and sourest, and whose eyes were on the ground, did not at once perceive his adversary, and came stem on.

The moment was irresistible. Laying his thumbs in his waistcoat pocket, and standing so as to bar his brother-in-law's path, Daddy launched a few unctuous words in his smoothest voice.

'Tom, me boy, thou hast imagined a device which thou wast not able to perform. But the Lord, Tom, hath made thee turn thy back. And they of thy own household, Tom, have lifted up the heel against thee.'

Purcell, strong, dark-browed fellow that he was,

wavered and blenched for a moment under the surprise of this audacious attack. Then with an oath he put out his hand, seized Daddy's thin shoulder, flung him violently round, and passed him.

'Speak to me again in the street, you scoundrel, and I'll give you in charge!' he threw behind him, as he strode on just in time to avoid a flight of street-arabs, who had seen the scuffle from a distance and were bearing down eagerly upon him.

Daddy went home in the highest spirits, stepping jauntily along like a man who has fulfilled a mission. But when he came to boast himself to Dora, he found to his chagrin that he had only earned a scolding. Dora flushed up, her soft eyes all aflame.

'You've done nothing but mischief, father,' said Dora, bitterly. 'How *could* you say such things? You might have left Uncle Tom to find out for himself about Lucy. He'll be mad enough without your stirring him up. Now he'll forbid her to come here, or see me at all. I don't know what 'll become of that child; and whatever possessed you to go aggravating him worse and worse I can't think.'

Daddy blinked under this, but soon recovered himself. No one, he vowed, could be expected to put up for ever with Purcell's mean tricks. He had held his tongue for twenty-one years, and now he had paid back one *little* text in exchange for the hundreds wherewith Purcell had been wont to break his bones for him in past days. As for Dora, she hadn't the spirit of a fly.

‘Well, I dare say I am afraid,’ said Dora, despondently. ‘I saw Uncle Tom yesterday, too, and he gave me a look made me feel cold down my back. I don’t like anybody to hate us like that, father. Who knows——’

A tremor ran through her. She gave her father a piteous, childish look. She had the timidity, the lack of self-confidence which seems to cling through life to those who have been at a disadvantage with the world in their childhood and youth. The anger of a man like Purcell terrified her, lay like a nightmare on a sensitive and introspective nature.

‘Pish!’ said Daddy, contemptuously; ‘I should like to know what harm he can do us, now that I’ve turned so d——d respectable. Though it is a bit hard on a man to have to keep so in order to spite his brother-in-law.’

Dora laughed and sighed. She came up to her father’s chair, put his hair straight, re-tied his tie, and then kissed him on the cheek.

‘Father, you’re not getting tired of the Parlour?’ she said, unsteadily. He evaded her downward look, and tried to shake her off.

‘Don’t I slave for you from morning till night, you thankless chit, you? And don’t you begrudge me all the little amusements which turn the tradesman into the man and sweeten the pill of bondage—eh, you poor-souled thing?’

Her eyes, however, drew his after them, whether he

would or no, and they surveyed each other—he uneasily hostile ; she sad. She slowly shook her head, and he perfectly understood what was in her mind, though she did not speak. He *had* been extremely slack at business lately ; the month's accounts made up that morning had been unusually disappointing ; and twice during the last ten days Dora had sat up till midnight to let her father in, and had tried with all the energy of a sinking heart to persuade herself that it was accident, and that he was only excited, and not drunk.

Now, as she stood looking at him, suddenly all the horror of those long-past days came back upon her, thrown up against the peace of the last few years. She locked her hands round his neck with a vehement pathetic gesture.

‘ Father, be good to me ! don’t let bad people take you away from me—don’t, father—you’re all I have—all I ever shall have.’

Daddy’s green eyes wavered again uncomfortably.

‘ Stuff ! ’ he said, irritably. ‘ You’ll get a husband directly, and think no more of me than other girls do when the marrying fit takes ’em. What are you grinning at now, I should like to know ? ’

For she was smiling—a light tremulous smile which puzzled him.

‘ At you, father. You’ll have to keep me whether you like it or no. For I’m not a marrying sort.’

She looked at him with a curious defiance, her lip twitching.

‘Oh, we know all about that!’ said Daddy, impatiently, adding in a mincing voice, “‘I will not love; if I do hang me; i’ faith I will not.” No, my pretty dear, not till the “wimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy” comes this road—oh, no, not till next time! Quite so.’

She let him rail, and said nothing. She sat down to her work; he faced round upon her suddenly, and said, frowning:

‘What do you mean by it, eh? You’re as good-looking as anybody!’

‘Well, I want you to think it, father,’ she said, affectionately, raising her eyes to his. A mother must have seen the shrinking sadness beneath the smile. What Daddy saw was simply a rounded girlish face, with soft cheeks and lips which seemed to him made for kissing; nothing to set the Thames on fire, perhaps, but why should she run herself down? It annoyed him, touched his vanity.

‘Oh, I dare say!’ he said to her, roughly, with an affected brutality. ‘But you’ll be precious disappointed if some one else doesn’t think so too. Don’t tell me!’

She bent over her frame without speaking. But her heart filled with bitterness, and a kind of revolt against her life.

Meanwhile her conscience accused her about Lucy. Lucy must have got herself into trouble at home, that

she was sure of. And it was unlike her to keep it to herself—not to come and complain.

Some days—a week—passed. But Dora dared not venture herself into her uncle's house after Daddy's escapade, and she was, besides, much pressed with her work. A whole set of altar furniture for a new church at Blackburn had to be finished by a given day.

The affairs of the Parlour troubled her, and she got up long before it was light to keep the books in order and to plan for the day. Daddy had no head for figures, and he seemed to her to be growing careless about expenses. Her timid, over-anxious mind conjured up the vision of a slowly rising tide of debt, and it haunted her all day. When she went to her frame she was already tired out, and yet there she sat over it hour after hour.

Daddy was blind. But Sarah, the stout cook, who worshipped her, knew well enough that she was growing thin and white.

'If yo doan't draw in yo'll jest do yorsel a mischief,' she said to her, angrily. 'Yo're nowt but a midge onyways, and a body 'll soon be able to see through yo.'

'I shall be all right, Sarah,' Dora would say.

'Aye, we'st aw on us be aw reet in our coffins,' returned the irate Sarah. Then, melting into affection, 'Neaw, honey, be raysonable, an' I'st just run round t' corner, an' cook you up a bit o' meat for your supper. Yo git no strength eawt i' them messin things yo eat. Theer's nowt but wind in em.'

But not even the heterodox diet with which, every now and then, Dora for peace' sake allowed herself to be fed, behind Daddy's back, put any colour into her cheeks. She went heavily in these days, and the singularly young and childish look which she had kept till now went into gradual eclipse.

David Grieve dropped in once or twice during the week to laugh and gossip about Purcell with Daddy. Thanks to Daddy's tongue, the bookseller's plot against his boy rival was already known to a large circle of persons, and was likely to cost him customers.

Whenever she heard the young full voice below or on the stairs, Dora would, as it were, draw herself together—stand on her defence. Sometimes she asked him eagerly about his sister. Had he written? No; he thought he would still wait a week or two. Ah, well, he must let her know.

And, on the whole, she was glad when he went, glad to get to bed and sleep. Being no sentimental heroine, she was prosaically thankful that she kept her sleep. Otherwise she must have fallen ill, and the accounts would have gone wrong.

At last one evening came a pencil note from Lucy, in these terms:

‘You may come and see me, father says. I’ve been ill.—LUCY.’

In a panic Dora put on her things and ran. Mary Ann, the little hunted maid, let her in, looking more hunted and scared than usual. Miss Lucy was better,

she said, but she had been 'terr'ble bad.' No, she didn't know what it was took her. They'd got a nurse for her two nights, and she, Mary Ann, had been run off her legs.

'Why didn't you send for me?' cried Dora, and hurried up to the attic. Purcell did not appear.

Lucy was waiting for her, looking out eagerly from a bank of pillows.

Dora could not restrain an exclamation which was almost a cry. She could not have believed that anyone could have changed so in ten days. Evidently the acute stage—whatever had been the illness—was past. There was already a look of convalescence in the white face, with its black-rimmed eyes and peeling lips. But the loss of flesh was extraordinary for so short a time. The small face was so thinned and blanched that the tangled masses of golden-brown hair in which it was framed seemed ridiculously out of proportion to it; the hand playing with some grapes on the counterpane was of a ghostly lightness.

Dora was shocked almost beyond speaking. She stood holding Lucy's hand, and Lucy looked up at her, evidently enjoying her consternation, for a smile danced in her hollow eyes.

'Lucy, *why* didn't you send for me?'

'Because I was so feverish at first. I was all light-headed, and didn't know where I was; and then I was so weak I didn't care about anything,' said Lucy, in a small thread of a voice.

‘What was it?’

‘Congestion of the lungs,’ said the girl, with pride. ‘They just stopped it, or you’d be laying me out now, Dora. Dr. Alford told father I was dreadful run-down or I’d never have taken it. I’m to go to Hastings. Father’s got a cousin there that lets lodgings.’

‘But how did you get so ill, Lucy?’

Lucy was silent a bit. Then she said:

‘Sit down close here. My voice is so bad still.’

Dora sat close to her pillow, and bent over, stroking her hands with emotion. The fright of her entrance was still upon her.

‘Well, you know,’ she said in a hoarse whisper, ‘father found out about me and Mr. Grieve—I don’t know how, but it was one morning. I was sitting in here, and he came in all white, with his eyes glaring. I thought he was going to kill me, and I was that frightened, I watched my chance, and ran out of the door and along into Mill Gate as fast as I could to get away from him; and then I thought I saw him coming after me, and I ran on across the bridge and up Chapel Street a long, long way. I was in a terrible fright, and mad with him besides. I declared to myself I’d never come back here. Well, it was pouring with rain, and I got wet through. Then I didn’t know where to go, and what do you think I did? I just got into the Broughton tram, and rode up and down all day! I had a shilling or two in my pocket, and I waited and dodged a bit at either end, so the conductor shouldn’t find out.

And that was what did it—sitting in my wet things all day. I didn't think anything about dinner, I was that mad. But when it got dark, I thought of that girl—you know her, too—Minnie Park, that lives with her brother and sells fents, up Cannon Gate. And somehow I dragged up there—I thought I'd ask her to take me in. And what happened I don't rightly know. I suppose I was took with a faint before I could explain anything, for I was shivering and pretty bad when I got there. Anyway, she put me in a cab and brought me home; and I don't remember anything about it, for I was queer in the head very soon after they got me to bed. Oh, I *was* bad! It was just a squeak,'—said Lucy, her voice dropping from exhaustion; but her eyes glittered in her pinched face with a curious triumph, difficult to decipher.

Dora kissed her tenderly, and entreated her not to talk; she was sure it was bad for her. But Lucy, as usual, would not be managed. She held herself quite still, gathering breath and strength; then she began again:

'If I'd died, perhaps *he*'d have been sorry. You know who I mean. It was all along of him. And father 'll never forgive me—never. He looks quite different altogether somehow. Dora! you're not to tell him anything till I've got right away. I think—I think—I *hate* him!'

And suddenly her beautiful brown eyes opened wide and fierce.

Dora hung over her, a strange, mingled passion in her look. 'You poor little thing!' she said slowly, with a deep emphasis, answering not the unreal Lucy of those last words, but the real one, so pitifully evident beneath.

'But look here, Dora; when I'm gone away, you *may* tell him—you *must* tell him, Dora,' said the child, imperiously. 'I'd not have him see me now for anything. I made Mary Ann put all the glasses away. I don't want to remember what a fright I am. But at Hastings I'll soon get well; and—and remember, Dora, you *are* to tell him. I'd like him to know I nearly caught my death that day, and that it was all along of him!'

She laid her hands across each other on the sheet with a curious sigh of satisfaction, and was quiet for a little, while Dora held her hand. But it was not long before the stillness broke up in sudden agitation. A tremor ran through her, and she caught Dora's fingers. In her weakness she could not control herself, and her inmost trouble escaped her.

'Oh, Dora, he wasn't kind to me, not a bit—when I went to tell him that night. Oh! I cried when I came home. I *did* think he'd have taken it different.'

'What did he say?' asked Dora, quietly. Her face was turned away from Lucy, but she still held her hand.

'Oh, I don't know!' said Lucy, moving her head restlessly from side to side and gulping down a sob.

‘I believe he was just sorry it was *me* he’d got to thank. Oh, I don’t know!—I don’t know!—very likely he didn’t mean it.’

She waited a minute, then she began again :

‘Oh of course you think I’m silly; and that I’d have much more chance if I turned proud, and pretended I didn’t care. I know some girls *say* they’d never let a man know they cared for him first. I don’t believe in ‘em! But I don’t care. I can’t help it. It’s my way. But, Dora, look here!’

The tears gathered thick in her eyes. Dora, bending anxiously over her, was startled by the change of expression in her. From what depths of new emotion had the silly Lucy caught the sweetness which trembled for a moment through every line of her little trivial face?

‘You know, Dora, it was all nonsense at the beginning. I just wanted some one to amuse myself with and pay me attentions. But it isn’t nonsense now. And I don’t want him all for myself. Friday night I thought I was going to die. I don’t care whether the doctor did or not; *I* did. And I prayed a good deal. It was queer praying, I dare say. I was very light-headed, but I thanked God I loved him, though—though—he didn’t care about me; and I thought if I did get well, and he were to take a fancy to me, I’d show him I could be as nice as other girls. I wouldn’t want everything for myself, or spend a lot of money on dress.’

She broke off for want of breath. This moral

experience of hers was so new and strange to her that she could hardly find words in which to clothe it.

Dora had slipped down beside her and buried her face in the bed. When Lucy stopped, she still knelt there in a quivering silence. But Lucy could not bear her to be silent—she must have sympathy.

‘Aren’t you glad, Dora?’ she said presently, when she had gathered strength again. ‘I thought you’d be glad. You’ve always wanted me to turn religious. And—and—perhaps, when I get well and come back, I’ll go with you to St. Damian’s, Dora. I don’t know what it is. I suppose it’s caring about somebody—and being ill—makes one feel like this.’

And, drawing herself from Dora’s hold, she turned on her side, put both her thin hands under her cheek, and lay staring at the window with a look which had a certain dreariness in it.

Dora at last raised herself. Lucy could not see her face. There was in it a sweet and solemn resolution—a new light and calm.

‘Dear Lucy,’ she said, tremulously, laying her cheek against her cousin’s shoulder, ‘God speaks to us when we are unhappy—that was what you felt. He makes everything a voice to call unto Himself.’

Lucy did not answer at once. Then suddenly she turned, and said eagerly :

‘Dora, did you ever ask him—did you ever find out—whether he was thinking about getting married? You said you would.’

‘He isn’t, Lucy. He was vexed with father for speaking about it. I think he feels he must make his way first. His business takes him up altogether.’

Lucy gave an irritable sigh, closed her eyes, and would talk no more. Dora stayed with her, and nursed her through the evening. When at last the nurse arrived who was to take charge of her through the night, Lucy pulled Dora down to her and said, in a hoarse, excitable whisper :

‘*Mind* you tell him—that I nearly died—that father ’ll never be the same to me again—and it was all for him! You needn’t say *I* said so.’

Late that night Dora stood long at her attic-window in the roof looking out at the April night. From a great bank of clouds to the east the moon was just appearing, sending her light along the windy streamers which, issuing from the main mass, spread like wild open fingers across the inner heaven. Opposite there was an old timbered house, one of the few relics of an earlier Manchester, which still, in the very centre of the modern city, thrusts out its broad eaves and overhanging stories beyond the line of the street. Above and behind it, roof beyond roof, to the western limit of sight, rose block after block of warehouses, vast black masses, symbols of the great town, its labours and its wealth; far to the right, closing the street, the cathedral cut the moonlit sky; and close at hand was an old inn, with a wide archway, under which a huge dog lay sleeping.

Town and sky, the upper clouds and stars, the familiar streets and buildings below—to-night they were all changed for Dora, and it was another being that looked at them. In all intense cases of religious experience the soul lies open to ‘voices’—to impressions which have for it the most vivid and, so to speak, physical reality. Jeanne d’Arc’s visions were but an extreme instance of what humbler souls have known in their degree in all ages. The heavenly voices speak, and the ear actually hears. So it was with Dora. It seemed to her that she had been walking in a feverish loneliness through the valley of the shadow of death; that one like unto the Son of Man had drawn her thence with warning and rebuke, and she was now at His feet, clothed and in her right mind. Words were in her ear, repeated again and again—peremptory words which stabbed and healed at once: ‘*Daughter, thou shalt not covet. I have refused thee this gift. If it be My will to give it to another, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me.*’

As she sank upon her knees, she thought of the confession she would make on Sunday—of the mysterious sanctity and sweetness of the single life—of the vocation of sacrifice laid upon her. There rose in her a kind of ecstasy of renunciation. Her love—already so hopeless, so starved!—was there simply that she might offer it up—burn it through and through with the fires of the spirit.

Lucy should never know, and David should never

know. Unconsciously, sweet soul, there was a curious element of spiritual arrogance mingled with this absolute surrender of the one passionate human desire her life was ever to wrestle with. The baptised member of Christ's body could not pursue the love of David Grieve, could not marry him as he was now, without risk and sin. But Lucy—the child of schism, to whom the mysteries of Church fellowship and sacramental grace were unknown—for her, in her present exaltation, Dora felt no further scruples. Lucy's love was clearly 'sent' to her; it was right, whether it were ultimately happy or no, because of the religious effect it had already had upon her.

The human happiness Dora dared no longer grasp at for herself she yearned now to pour lavishly, quickly, into Lucy's hands. Only so—such is our mingled life!—could she altogether still, violently and by force, a sort of upward surge of the soul which terrified her now and then. A mystical casuistry, bred in her naturally simple nature by the subtle influences of a long-descended Christianity, combined in her with a piteous human instinct. When she rose from her knees she was certain that she would never win and marry David Grieve; she was equally certain that she would do all in her power to help little Lucy to win and marry him.

So, like them of old, she pressed the spikes into her flesh, and found a numbing consolation in the pain.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME ten days more elapsed before Lucy was pronounced fit to travel south. During this time Dora saw her frequently, and the bond between the two girls grew much closer than before. On the one hand, Lucy yielded herself more than she had ever done yet to Dora's example and persuasion, promised to go to church and see at least what it was like when she got to Hastings, and let Dora provide her with some of her favourite High Church devotional books. On the other, it was understood between them that Dora would look after Lucy's interests, and keep her informed how the land lay while she was in the south, and Lucy, with the blindness of self-love, trusted herself to her cousin without a suspicion or a qualm.

While she was tending Lucy, Dora never saw Purcell but twice, when she passed him in the little dark entry leading to the private part of the house, and on those occasions he did not, so far as she could perceive, make any answer whatever to her salutation. He was changed, she thought. He had always been a morose-looking man, with an iron jaw; but now there

was a fixed venom and disquiet, as well as a new look of age, in the sallow face, which made it doubly unpleasing. She would have been sorry for his loneliness and his disappointment in Lucy but for the remembrance of his mean plot against David Grieve, and for a certain other little fact. A middle-aged woman, in a dowdy brown-stuff dress and black mantle, had begun to haunt the house. She sat with Purcell sometimes in the parlour downstairs, and sometimes he accompanied her out of doors. Mary Ann reported that she was a widow, a Mrs. Whymper, who belonged to the same chapel that Purcell did, and who was supposed by those who knew to have been making up to him for some time.

‘And perhaps she’ll get him after all,’ said the little ugly maid, with a grin. ‘Catch me staying then, Miss Dora ! It’s bad enough as it is.’

On one occasion Dora came across the widow, waiting in the little sitting-room. She was an angular person, with a greyish-brown complexion, a prominent mouth and teeth, and a generally snappish, alert look. After a few commonplaces, in which Mrs. Whymper was clearly condescending, she launched into a denunciation of Lucy’s ill behaviour to her father, which at last roused Dora to defence. She waxed bold, and pointed out that Lucy might have been managed if her father had been a little more patient with her, had allowed her a few ordinary amusements, and had not insisted in forcing her at once, fresh from school, into ways and

practices she did not naturally like, while she had never been trained to them by force of habit.

‘Hoity toity, Miss!’ said the widow, bridling, ‘young people are very uppish nowadays. They never seem to remember there is such a thing as the fifth commandment. In *my* young days what a father said was law, and no questions asked; and I’ve seen many a Lancashire man take a stick to his gell for less provocation than this gell’s given her feyther! I wonder at you, Miss Lomax, that I do, for backing her up. But I’m afraid from what I hear you’ve been taking up with a lot of Popish ways.’

And the woman looked her up and down with an air which plainly said that she was on her own ground in that parlour, and might say exactly what she pleased there.

‘If I have, I don’t see that it matters to you,’ said Dora quietly, and retreated.

Yes, certainly, a stepmother looked likely! Lucy in her bedroom upstairs knew nothing, and Dora decided to tell her nothing till she was stronger. But this new developement made the child’s future more uncertain than ever.

On the day before her departure for Hastings, Lucy came out for a short walk, by way of hardening herself for the journey. She walked round the cathedral and up Victoria Street, and then, tired out with the exertion, she made her way in to Dora, to rest. Her face was closely hidden by a thick Shetland veil, for, in addition

to her general pallor and emaciation, her usually clear and brilliant skin was roughened and blotched here and there by some effect of her illness; she could not bear to look at herself in the glass, and shrank from meeting any of her old acquaintances. It was, indeed, curious to watch the effect of the temporary loss of beauty upon her; her morbid impatience under it showed at every turn. But for it, Dora was convinced that she must and would have put herself in David Grieve's way again before leaving Manchester. As it was, she was still determined not to let him see her.

She came in, much exhausted, and threw herself into Daddy's arm-chair with groans of self-pity. Did Dora think she would ever be strong again—ever be anything but an ugly fright? It was hard to have all this come upon you, just through doing a service to some one who didn't care.

'Hasn't he heard yet that I've been ill?' she inquired petulantly.

No; Dora did not think he had. Neither she nor Daddy had seen him. He must have been extra busy. But she would get Daddy to ask him up to supper directly, and tell him all about it.

'And then, perhaps,' she said, looking up with a sweet, intense look—how little Lucy was able to decipher it!—'perhaps he may write a letter.'

Lucy was cheered by this suggestion, and sat looking out of window for a while, idly watching the passers-by. But she could not let the one topic that absorbed

her mind alone for long, and soon she was once more questioning Dora in close detail about David Grieve's sister and all that he had said about her. For, by way of obliging the child to realise some of the inconvenient burdens and obligations which were at that moment hanging round the young bookseller's neck, and making the very idea of matrimony ridiculous to him, Dora had repeated to her some of his confidences about himself and Louie. Lucy had not taken them very happily. Everything that turned up now seemed only to push her further out of sight and make her more insignificant. She was thirsting, with a woman's nascent passion and a schoolgirl's vanity, to be the centre and heroine of the play; and here she was reduced to the smallest and meanest of parts—a part that caught nobody's eye, do what she would.

Suddenly she broke off what she was saying, and called to Dora :

‘Do you see that pair of people, Dora? Come—come at once! What an extraordinary-looking girl!’

Dora turned unwillingly, being absorbed in a golden halo which she had set herself to finish that day; then she dropped her needle, and pushed her stool back that she might see better. From the cathedral end of Market Place an elderly grey-haired man and a young girl were advancing along the pavement towards the Parlour. As they passed, the flower-sellers at the booths were turning to look at them, some persons in front of them were turning back, and a certain number

of errand-boys and other loungers were keeping pace with them, observing them. The man leant every now and then on a thick stick he carried, and looked uncertainly from house to house. He had a worn, anxious expression, and the helpless movements of short sight. Whenever he stopped the girl moved on alone, and he had to hurry after her again to catch her up. She, meanwhile, was perfectly conscious that she was being stared at, and stared in return with a haughty composure which seemed to draw the eyes of the passers-by after it like a magnet. She was very tall and slender, and her unusual height made her garish dress the more conspicuous. The small hat perched on her black hair was all bright scarlet, both the felt and the trimming; under her jacket, which was purposely thrown back, there was a scarlet bodice, and there was a broad band of scarlet round the edge of her black dress.

Lucy could not take her eyes off her.

‘Did you *ever* see anybody so handsome, Dora? But what a fast, horrid creature to dress like that! And just look at her; she won’t wait for the old man, though he’s calling to her—she goes on staring at everybody. They’ll have a crowd, presently! Why, they’re coming *here*!’

For suddenly the girl stopped outside the doorway below, and beckoned imperiously to her companion. She said a few sharp words to him, and the pair upstairs felt the swing-door of the restaurant open and shut.

Lucy, forgetting her weakness, ran eagerly to the sitting-room door and listened.

There was a sound of raised voices below, and then the door at the foot of the stairs opened, and Daddy was heard shouting.

‘There—go along upstairs. My daughter, she’ll speak to you. And don’t you come back this way—a man can’t be feeding Manchester and taking strangers about, all in the same twinkling of an eye, you know, not unless he happens to have a few spare bodies handy, which ain’t precisely my case. My daughter ’ll tell you what you want to know, and show you out by the private door. Dora!’

Dora stood waiting rather nervously at the sitting-room door. The girl came up first, the old man behind her, bewildered and groping his way.

‘We’re strangers here—we want somebody to show us the way. We’ve been to the book-shop in Half Street, and they sent us on here. They were just brutes to us at that book-shop,’ said the girl, with a vindictive emphasis and an imperious self-possession which fairly paralysed Lucy and Dora. Lucy’s eyes, moreover, were riveted on her face, on its colour, its fineness of feature, its brilliance and piercingness of expression. And what was the extraordinary likeness in it to something familiar?

‘Why!’ said Dora, in a little cry, ‘aren’t you Mr. David Grieve’s sister?’

For she had traced the likeness before Lucy. ‘Oh, it must be!’

‘Well, I am his sister, if you want to know,’ said the stranger, looking astonished in her turn. ‘He wrote to me to come up. And I lent the letter to uncle to read—that’s his uncle—and he went and lost it somehow, fiddling about the fields while I was putting my things together. And then we couldn’t think of the proper address there was in it—only the name of a man Purcell, in Half Street, that David said he’d been with for two years. So we went there to ask; and, *my!*—weren’t they rude to us! There was an ugly black man there chivied us out in no time—wouldn’t tell us anything. But as I was shutting the door the shopman whispered to me, “Try the Parlour—Market Place.” So we came on here, you see.’

And she stared about her, at the room, and at the girls, taking in everything with lightning rapidity—the embroidery frame, Lucy’s veil and fashionably cut jacket, the shabby furniture, the queer old pictures.

‘Please come in,’ said Dora civilly, ‘and sit down. If you’re strangers here, I’ll just put on my hat and take you round. Mr. Grieve’s a friend of ours. He’s in Potter Street. You’ll find him nicely settled by now. This is my cousin, Mr. Purcell’s daughter.’

And she ran upstairs, leaving Lucy to grapple with the new-comers.

The two girls sat down, and eyed each other. Reuben stood patiently waiting.

‘Is the man at Half Street your father?’ asked the new-comer, abruptly.

‘Yes,’ said Lucy, conscious of the strangest mingling of admiration and dislike, as she met the girl’s wonderful eyes.

‘Did he and Davy fall out?’

‘They didn’t get on about Sundays,’ said Lucy, unwillingly, glad of the sheltering veil which enabled her to hold her own against this masterful creature.

‘Is your father strict about chapel and that sort of thing?’

Lucy nodded. She felt an ungracious wish to say as little as possible.

David’s sister laughed.

‘Davy was that way once—just for a bit—before he ran away. I knew he wouldn’t keep it on.’

Then, with a queer look over her shoulder at her uncle, she relapsed into silence. Her attention was drawn to Dora’s frame, and she moved up to it, bending over it and lifting the handkerchief that Dora had thrown across it.

‘You mustn’t touch it!’ said Lucy, hastily, provoked, she knew not why, by every movement the girl made. ‘It’s very particular work.’

‘I’m used to fine things,’ said the other, scornfully. ‘I’m a silk-weaver—that’s my trade—all the best brocades, drawing-room trains, that style of thing. If you didn’t handle *them* carefully, you’d know it. Yes, she’s doing it well,’ and the speaker put her head down and examined the work critically. ‘But it must go fearful slow, compared to a loom.’

‘She does it splendidly,’ said Lucy, annoyed; ‘she’s getting quite famous for it. That’s going to a great church up in London, and she’s got more orders than she can take.’

‘Does she get good pay?’ asked the girl eagerly.

‘I don’t know,’ replied Lucy shortly.

‘Because, if there’s good pay,’ said the other, examining the work again closely, ‘I’d soon learn it—why I’d learn it in a week, you see! If I stay here I shan’t get no more silk-weaving. And of course I’ll stay. I’m just sick of the country. I’d have come up long ago if I’d known where to find Davy.’

‘I’m ready,’ said Dora in a constrained voice beside her.

Louie Grieve looked up at her.

‘Oh, you needn’t look so glum!—I haven’t hurt it. I’m used to good things, stuffs at two guineas a yard, and the like of that. What money do you take a week?’ and she pointed to the frame.

Something in the tone and manner made the question specially offensive. Dora pretended not to hear it.

‘Shall we go now?’ she said, hurriedly covering her precious work up from those sacrilegious fingers and putting it away. ‘Lucy, you ought to be going home.’

‘Well, I will directly,’ said Lucy. ‘Don’t you bother about me.’

They all went downstairs. Lucy put up her veil, and pressed her face against the window, watching for them. As she saw them cross Market Street, she was

seized with hungry longing. She wanted to be going with them, to talk to him herself—to let him see what she had gone through for him. It would be months and months, perhaps, before they met again. And Dora would see him—his horrid sister—everyone but she. He would forget all about her, and she would be dull and wretched at Hastings.

But as she turned away in her restless pain, she caught sight of her changed face in the cracked looking-glass over the mantelpiece. Her white lips tightened. She drew down her veil, and went home.

Meanwhile Dora led the way to Potter Street. Louie took little notice of any attempts to talk to her. She was wholly engaged in looking about her and at the shops. Especially was she attracted by the drapers' windows in St. Ann's Square, pronouncing her opinion loudly and freely as to their contents.

Dora fell meditating. Young Grieve would have his work cut out for him, she thought, if this extraordinary sister were really going to settle with him. She was very like him—strangely like him. And yet in the one face there was a quality which was completely lacking in the other, and which seemed to make all the difference. Dora tried to explain what she meant to herself, and failed.

'Here's Potter Street,' she said, as they turned into it. 'And that's his shop—that one with the stall outside. Oh, there he is!'

David was in fact standing on his step talking to a customer who was turning over the books outside.

Lonie looked at him. Then she began to run. Old Grieve too, crimson all over, and evidently much excited, hurried on. Dora fell behind, her quick sympathies rising.

‘They won’t want me interfering,’ she said, turning round. ‘I’ll just go back to my work.’

Meanwhile, in David’s little back room, which he had already swept and garnished—for after his letter of the night before, he had somehow expected Lonie to rush upon him by the earliest possible train—the meeting of these long-sundered persons took place.

David saw Reuben come in with amazement.

‘Why, Uncle Reuben! Well, I’m real glad to see you. I didn’t think you’d have been able to leave the farm. Well, this is my bit of a place, you see. What do you think of it?’

And, holding his sister by the hand, the young fellow looked joyously at his uncle, pride in his new possessions and the recollection of his destitute childhood rushing upon him together as he spoke.

‘Aye, it’s a fine beginning yo’ve made, Davy,’ said the old man, cautiously looking round, first at the little room, with its neat bits of new furniture in Louie’s honour, and then through the glass door at the shop, which was now heavily lined with books. ‘Yo wor allus a cliver lad, Davy. A’ think a’ll sit down.’

And Reuben, subsiding into a chair, fell forthwith into an abstraction, his old knotted hands trembling a little on his knees.

Meanwhile David was holding Louie at arm's-length to look at her. He had kissed her heartily when she came in first, and now he was all pleasure and excitement.

' 'Pon my word, Louie, you've grown as high as the roof! I say, Louie, what's become of that smart pink dress you wore at last "wake," and of that overlooker, with the moustaches, from New Mills, you walked about with all day? '

She stared at him open-mouthed.

' What do you mean by that? ' she said, quickly.

David laughed out.

' And who was it gave Jim Wigson a box on the ears last fifth of November, in the lane just by the Dye-works, eh, Miss Louie?—and danced with young Red-way at the Upper Mill dance, New Year's Day?—and had words with Mr. James at the office about her last "cut," a fortnight ago—eh, Louie? '

' What *ever* do you mean? ' she said, half crossly, her colour rising. ' You've been spying on me.'

She hated to be mystified. It made her feel herself in some one else's power; and the wild creature in her blood grew restive.

' Why, I've known all about you these four years! ' the lad began, with dancing eyes. Then suddenly his voice changed, and dropped: ' I say, look at Uncle Reuben! '

For Reuben sat bent forward, his light blurred eyes looking out straight before him, with a singular yet blind intentness, as though, while seeing nothing round about him, they passed beyond the walls of the little room to some vision of their own.

‘I don’t know whatever he came for,’ began Louie, as they both examined him.

‘Uncle Reuben,’ said David, going up to him and touching him on the shoulder, ‘you look tired. You’ll be wanting some dinner. I’ll just send my man, John Dalby, round the corner for something.’

And he made a step towards the door, but Reuben raised his hand.

‘Noa, noa, Davy! Shut that door, wiltha?’

David wondered, and shut it.

Then Reuben gave a long sigh, and put his hand deep into his coat pocket, with the quavering, uncertain movement characteristic of him.

‘Davy, my lad, a’ve got summat to say to tha.’

And with many hitches, while the others watched him in astonishment, he pulled out of his pocket a canvas bag and put it down on an oak stool in front of him. Then he undid the string of it with his large awkward fingers, and pushed the stool across to David.

‘Theer’s sixty pund theer, Davy—sixty pund! Yo can keawnt it—it’s aw reet. A’ve saved it for yo, this four year—four year coom lasst Michaelmas Day. Hannah nor nobory knew owt abeawt it. But it’s yourn—it’s yor share, being t’ half o’ Mr. Gurney’s

money. Louie's share—that wor different; we had a reet to that, she bein a growin girl, and doin nowt mich for her vittles. Fro the time when yo should ha had it—whether for wages or for 'prenticin—an yo *couldna* ha it, because Hannah had set hersen agen it,—a saved it for tha, owt o' t' summer cattle moastly. without tellin nobory, so as not to mak words.'

David, bewildered, had taken the bag into his hand. Louie's eyes were almost out of her head with curiosity and amazement. '*Mr. Gurney's money!*' What did he mean? It was all double-Dutch to them.

David, with an effort, controlled himself, being now a man and a householder. He stood with his back against the shop door, his gaze fixed on Reuben.

'Now, Uncle Reuben, I don't understand a bit of what you've been saying, and Louie don't either. Who's Mr. Gurney? and what's his money?'

Unconsciously the young man's voice took a sharp, magisterial note. Reuben gave another long sigh. He was now leaning on his stick, staring at the floor.

'Noa,—a' know yo doan't understan; a've got to tell tha—'at's t' worst part on 't. An I'm soa bad at tellin. Do yo mind when yor feyther deed, Davy?' he said suddenly, looking up.

David nodded,—a red flush of presentiment spread itself over his face—his whole being hung on Reuben's words.

'He sent for me afore he deed,' continued Reuben, slowly; 'an he tow'd me aw about his affairs. Six

hunderd pund he'd got saved—*six-hunderd-pund*! Aye, it wor a lot for a yoong mon like him, and after sich a peck o' troobles! An he towd me Mr. Gurney ud pay us th' interest for yor bringin-up—th' two on yo; an whan yo got big, Davy, I wor to tak keawnsel wi Mr. Gurney, an, if yo chose for t' land, yo were to ha yor money for a farm, when yo wor big eneuf, an if yo turned agen th' land, yo wor to be 'prenticed to soom trade, an ha yor money when yo wanted it,—Mr. Gurney bein willin. An I promised him I'd deal honest wi his childer, an——'

Reuben paused painfully. He was wrestling with his conscience, and groping for words about his wife. The brother and sister sat open-mouthed, pale with excitement, afraid of losing a single syllable.

'An takkin it awthegither,' he said, bringing each word out with an effort, 'I doan't think, by t' Lord's mercy, as I've gone soa mich astray, though I ha been mich troobled this four year wi thowts o' Sandy—my brither Sandy—an wi not knowin wheer yo wor gone, Davy. Bit yo seem coom to an honest trade—an Louie theer ha larnt a trade too,—an addle't a bit money,—an she's a fine-grown lass——'

He turned a slow, searching look upon her, as though he were pleading a cause before some unseen judge.

'An theer's yor money, Davy. It's aw th' same, a'm thinkin, whether yo get it fro me or fro Mr. Gurney. An here——'

He rose, and unbuttoning his inner coat, fumbled in the pocket of it till he found a letter.

‘An here is a letter for Mr. Gurney. If yo gie me a pen, Davy, I’ll write in to ’t yor reet address, an put it in t’ post as I goo to t’ station. I took noatice of a box as I coom along. An then——’

He stood still a moment pondering, one outspread hand on the letter.

‘An then theer’s nowt moor as a can remember,—an your aunt ull be wearyin; an it’s but reet she should know now, at wonst, abeawt t’ money a’ve saved this four year, an t’ letter to Mr. Gurney. Yo understan—when yor letter came this mornin—t’ mon browt it up to Louie abeawt eight o’clock—she towld me fust out i’ th’ yard—an I said to her, “Doan’t you tell yor aunt nowt abeawt it, an we’st meet at t’ station.” An I made soom excuse to Hannah abeawt gooin ower t’ Scout after soom beëasts—an—an—Louie an me coom thegither.’

He passed his other hand painfully across his brow. The travail of expression, the moral struggle of the last twenty-four hours, seemed to have aged him before them.

David sat looking at him in a stupefied silence. A light was breaking in upon him, transfiguring, combining, interpreting a hundred scattered remembrances of his boyhood. But Louie, the instant her uncle stopped, broke into a string of questions, shrill and breathless, her face quite white, her eyes glittering.

Reuben seemed hardly to hear her, and in the middle of them David said sharply,

‘Stop that, Louie, and let me talk to Uncle Reuben!’

He drew the letter from under Reuben’s fingers, and went on, steadily looking up into his uncle’s face :

‘You’ll let me read it, uncle, and I’ll get you a pen directly to put in the address. But first will you tell us about father? You never did—you nor Aunt Hannah. And about mother, too?’

He said the last words with difficulty, having all his life been pricked by a certain instinct about his mother, which had, however, almost nothing definite to work upon. Reuben thought a minute, then sat down again patiently.

‘Aye, a’l tell tha. Theer’s nobody else can. An tha ought to know, though it’ll mebbe be a shock to tha.’

And, with his head resting against his stick, he began to tell the story of his brother and his brother’s marriage as he remembered it.

First came the account of Sandy’s early struggles, as Sandy himself had described them on that visit which he had paid to the farm in the first days of his prosperity; then a picture of his ultimate success in business, as it had appeared to the dull elder brother dazzled by the younger’s ‘cliverness.’

‘Aye, he might ha been a great mon; he might ha coom to varra high things, might Sandy,’ said Reuben

solemnly, his voice suddenly rising, 'bit for th' hizzy that ruined him !'

Both his hearers made an involuntary movement. But Reuben had now lost all count of them. He was intent on one thing, and capable only of one thing. They had asked him for his story, and he was telling it, with an immense effort of mind, recovering the past as best he could, and feeling some of it over again intensely.

So when he came to the marriage, he told the story like one thinking it out to himself, with an appalling plainness of phrase. It was, of course, impossible for him to *explain* Sandy's aberration—there were no resources in him equal to the task. Louise Suveret became in his account what she had always remained in his imagination since Sandy's employers told him what was known of her story—a mere witch and devil, sent for his brother's perdition. All his resentment against his brother's fate had passed into his hatred of this creature whom he had never seen. Nay, he even held up the picture of her hideous death before her children with a kind of sinister triumph. So let the ungodly and the harlot perish !

David stood opposite to the speaker all the while, motionless, save for an uneasy movement here and there when Reuben's words grew more scripturally frank than usual. Louie's face was much more positive than David's in what it said. Reuben and Reuben's vehemence annoyed and angered her. She frowned at him

from under her black brows. It was evident that he, rather than his story, excited her.

‘An we buried him aw reet an proper,’ said Reuben at last, wiping his brow, damp with this unwonted labour of brain and tongue. ‘Mr. Gurney he would ha it aw done handsome; and we put him in a corner o’ Kensal Green, just as close as might be to whar they’d put her after th’ crowner had sat on her. Yor feyther had left word, an Mr. Gurney would ha nowt different. But it went agen me—aye, it *did*—to leave him wi *her* after aw!’

And falling suddenly silent, Reuben sat wrapped in a sombre mist of memory.

Then Louie broke out, rolling and unrolling the ribbons of her hat in hot fingers.

‘I don’t believe half on’t—I don’t see how you could know—nor Mr. Gurney either.’

Reuben looked round bewildered. Louie got up noisily, went to the window and threw it open, as though oppressed by the narrowness of the room.

‘No, I don’t,’ she repeated, defiantly—‘I don’t believe the half on ’t. But I’ll find out some day.’

She leaned her elbows on the sill, and, looking out into the squalid bit of yard, threw a bit of grit that lay on the window at a cat that sat sleepily blinking on the flags outside.

Reuben rose heavily.

‘Gie me pen and ink, Davy, an let me go.’

The young man brought it him without a word. Reuben put in the address.

‘Ha yo read it, Davy?’

David started. In his absorption he had forgotten to read it.

‘I wor forced to write it i’ the top sheepfold,’ Reuben began to explain apologetically, then stopped suddenly. Several times he had been on the point of bringing Hannah into the conversation, and had always refrained. He refrained now. David read it. It was written in Reuben’s most laborious business style, and merely requested that Mr. Gurney would now communicate with Sandy’s son direct on the subject of his father’s money. He had left Needham Farm, and was old enough to take counsel himself with Mr. Gurney in future as to what should be done with it.

Reuben looked over David’s shoulder as he read.

‘An Louie?’ he said uncertainly, at the end, jerking his thumb towards her.

‘I’m stayin here,’ said Louie peremptorily, still looking out of window.

Reuben said nothing. Perhaps a shade of relief lightened his old face.

When the letter was handed back to him, he sealed it and put it into his pocket, buttoning up his coat for departure.

‘Yo wor talkin abeawt dinner, Davy—or summat,’ said the old man, courteously. ‘Thankee kindly. I want for nowt. I mun get home—I mun get home.’

Louie, standing absorbed in her own excited thoughts, could hardly be disturbed to say good-bye to him. David, still in a dream, led him through the shop, where Reuben peered about him with a certain momentary curiosity.

But at the door he said good-bye in a great hurry and ran down the steps, evidently impatient to be rid of his nephew.

David turned and came slowly back through the little piled-up shop, where John, all eyes and ears, sat on a high stool in the corner, into the living room.

As he entered it Louie sprang upon him, and seizing him with both hands, danced him madly round the little space of vacant boards, till she tripped her foot over the oak stool, and sank down on a chair, laughing wildly.

‘How much of that money am I going to have?’ she demanded suddenly, her arms crossed over her breast, her eyes brilliant, her whole aspect radiant and exulting.

David was standing over the fire, looking down into it, and made no answer. He had disengaged himself from her as soon as he could.

Louie waited a while ; then, with a contemptuous lip and a shrug of the shoulders, she got up.

‘What’s the good of worriting about things, I’d like to know ? You won’t do ’em no good. Why don’t you think about the money ? My word, won’t Aunt Hannah be mad ! How am I to get my parcels from the station, and where am I to sleep ?’

‘You can go and see the house,’ said David, shortly. ‘The lodgers upstairs are out, and there’s the key of the attic.’

He threw it to her, and she ran off. He had meant to take her in triumphal progress through the little house, and show her all the changes he had been making for her benefit and his own. But a gulf had yawned between them. He was relieved to see her go, and when he was left alone he laid his arms on the low mantelpiece and hid his face upon them. His mother’s story, his father’s fate, seemed to be burning into his heart.

Reuben hurried home through the bleak March evening. In the train he could not keep himself still, fidgiting so much that his neighbours eyed him with suspicion, and gave him a wide berth. As he started to walk up to Kinder a thin, raw sleet came on. It drove in his face, chilling him through and through, as he climbed the lonely road, where the black moorland forms lay all about him, seen dimly through the white and drifting veil of the storm. But he was conscious of nothing external. His mind was absorbed by the thought of his meeting with Hannah, and by the excited feeling that one of the crises of his timid and patient life was approaching. During the last four years they had been very poor, in spite of Mr. Gurney’s half-yearly cheque, partly because of the determination with which he had stuck to his secret saving. Hannah

would think they were going now to be poorer still, but he meant to prove to her that what with Louie's departure and the restoration of their whole income to its natural channels, there would not be so much difference. He conned his figures eagerly, rehearsing what he would say. For the rest he walked lightly and briskly. The burden of his brother's children had dropped away from him, and in those strange inner colloquies of his he could look Sandy in the face again.

Had Hannah discovered his flight, he wondered? Some one, he was afraid, might have seen him and Louie at the station and told tales. He was not sure that one of the Wigsons had not been hanging about the station yard. And that letter of David's to Louie, which in his clumsy blundering way he had dropped somewhere about the farm buildings or the house, and had not been able to find again! It gave him a cold sweat to think that in his absence Hannah might have come upon it and drawn her own conclusions. As he followed out this possibility in his mind, his step quickened till it became almost a run.

Aye, and Hannah had been ailing of late—there had been often 'summat wrang wi her.' Well, they were both getting into years. Perhaps now that Louie with her sharp tongue and aggravating ways was gone, now that there was only him to do for, Hannah would take things easier.

He opened the gate into the farmyard and walked up to the house door with a beating heart. It struck

him as strange that the front blinds were not drawn, for it was nearly dark and the storm beat against the windows. There was a glimmer of fire in the room, but he could see nothing clearly. He turned the handle and went into the passage, making a clatter on purpose. But nothing stirred in the house, and he pushed open the kitchen door, which stood ajar, filled with a vague alarm.

Hannah was sitting in the rocking-chair, by the fire. Beside her was the table partly spread with tea, which, however, had been untouched. At Reuben's entrance she turned her head and looked at him fixedly. In the dim light—a mixture of the dying fire and of the moonlight from outside—he could not see her plainly, but he felt that there was something strange, and he ran forward to her.

‘Hannah, are yo bad?—is there owt wrang wi yo?’

Then his seeking eye made out a crumpled paper in her left hand, and he knew at once that it must be Davy's letter.

Before he could speak again she gave him a push backward with her free hand, and said with an effort:

‘Where's t' gell?’

‘Louie? She's left i' Manchester. A've found Davy, Hannah.’

There was a pause, after which he said, trembling:

‘Shall I get yo summat, Hannah?’

A hoarse voice came out of the dark:

‘Ha doon wi yo! Yo ha been leein to me. Yo wor seen at t’ station.’

Reuben sat down.

‘Hannah,’ he said, ‘yo mun just listen to me.’

And taking his courage in both hands, he told everything without a break: how he had been ‘feeart’ of what Sandy might say to him ‘at th’ joodgment,’ how he had saved and lied, and how now he had seen David, had written to Mr. Gurney, and stopped the cheques for good and all.

When he came to the letter to Mr. Gurney, Hannah sat suddenly upright in her chair, grasping one arm of it.

‘It shall mak noa difference to tha, a tell tha,’ he cried hastily, putting up his hand, fearing he knew not what, ‘nobbut a few shillins ony way. I’ll work for tha an mak it up.’

She made a sound which turned him cold with terror—a sound of baffled weakness, pain, vindictive passion all in one—then she fell helplessly to one side in her chair, and her grey head dropped on her shoulder.

In another moment he was crying madly for help in the road outside. For long there was no answer—only the distant roar of the Downfall and the sweep of the wind. Then a labourer, on the path leading to the Wigsons’ farm, heard and ran up.

An hour later a doctor had been got hold of, and Hannah was lying upstairs, tended by Mrs. Wigson and Reuben.

‘A paralytic seizure,’ said the doctor to Reuben. ‘This woman says she’s been failing for some time past. She’s lived and worked hard, Mr. Grieve; *you* know that. And there’s been some shock.’

Reuben explained incoherently. The doctor did not understand, and did not care, being a dull man and comparatively new to the place. He did what he could, said she would recover—oh, yes, she would recover; but, of course, she could never be the same woman again. Her working days were done.

A servant came over from Wigsons’ to sit up with Reuben, Mrs. Wigson being too delicate to undertake it. The girl went to lie down first for an hour or two in the room across the landing, and he was left alone in the gaunt room with his wife. Poor quailing soul! As he sat there in the windy darkness, hour after hour, open-mouthed and open-eyed, he was steeped in terror—terror of the future, of its forlornness, of his own feebleness, of death. His heart clave piteously to the unconscious woman beside him, for he had nothing else. It seemed to him that the Lord had indeed dealt hardly with him, thus to strike him down on the day of his great atonement!

CHAPTER IX

No news of the catastrophe at Needham Farm reached the brother and sister in Potter Street. The use of the pen had always been to Reuben one of the main torments and mysteries of life, and he had besides all those primitive instincts of silence and concealment which so often in the peasant nature accompany misfortune. His brain-power, moreover, was absorbed by his own calamity and by the changes in the routine of daily life which his wife's state brought upon him, so that immediately after his great effort of reparation towards them—an effort which had taxed the whole man physically and mentally—his brother's children and their affairs passed for a while strangely and completely from his troubled mind.

Meanwhile, what a transformation he had wrought in their fortunes! When the shock of his parents' story had subsided in him, and that other shock of jarring temperaments, which the first hour of Louie's companionship had brought with it, had been for the time forgotten again in the stress of plans and practical detail, David felt to the full the exhilaration of his new prospects. He had sprung at a leap, as it seemed to

him, from the condition of the boy-adventurer to that of the man of affairs. And as he looked back upon their childhood and realised that all the time, instead of being destitute and dependent orphans, they and their money had really been the mainstay of Hannah and the farm, the lad seemed to cast from him the long humiliation of years, to rise in stature and dignity. That old skin-flint and hypocrite, Aunt Hannah! With the usual imperfect sympathy of the young he did not much realise Reuben's struggle. But he bore his uncle no grudge for these years' delay. The contrivances and hardships of his Manchester life had been, after all, enjoyment. Without them and the extravagant self-reliance they had developed in him his pride and ambition would have run less high. And at this moment the nerve and savour of existence came to him from pride and from ambition.

But first of all he had to get his money. As soon as Mr. Gurney's answer to Reuben's letter came, David took train for London, made his way to the great West-End shop which had employed his father, and saw the partner who had taken charge of Sandy's money for so long. Mr. Gurney, a shrewd and pompous person, was interested in seeing Grieve's son, inquired what he was about, ran over the terms of a letter to himself, which he took out of a drawer, and then, with a little flourish as to his own deserts in the matter of the guardianship of the money—a flourish neither unnatural nor unkindly—handed over to the lad

both the letter and a cheque on a London bank, took his receipt, talked a little, but with a blunted memory, about the lad's father, gave him a little general business advice, asked whether his sister was still alive, and bade him good morning. Both were satisfied, and the young man left the office with the cheque lying warm in his pocket, looking slowly and curiously round the shop where his father had earned it, as he walked away.

Outside he found himself close to Trafalgar Square, and, striking down to the river, he went to sit on the Embankment and ponder the enclosures which Mr. Gurney had given him. First he took out the cheque, with infinite care, lest the breeze on the Embankment should blow it out of his hand, and spread it on his knee. 600*l*.! As he stared at each letter and flourish his eyes widened anew; and when he looked up across the grey and misty river, the figures still danced before him, and in his exultation he could have shouted the news to the passers by. Then, when the precious paper had been safely stowed away again, he hesitatingly took out the other—his father's dying memorandum on the subject of his children, so he had understood Mr. Gurney. It was old and brown; it had been written with anguish, and it could only be deciphered with difficulty. There had been no will properly so called. Sandy had placed more confidence in 'the firm' than in the law, and had left behind him merely the general indication of his wishes in the hands of the partner who had

specially befriended him. The provisions of it were as Sandy had described them to Reuben on his death-bed. Especially did the father insist that there should be no artificial restriction of age. 'I wanted money most when I was nineteen, and I could have used it just as well then as I could at any later time.'

So he might have been a rich man at least a year earlier. Well, much as he had loathed Purcell, he was glad, on the whole, that things were as they were. He had been still a great fool, he reflected, a year ago.

Then, as to Louie, the letter ran: 'Let Davy have all the money, and let him manage for her. I won't divide it; he must judge. He may want it all, and it may be best for them both he should have it. He's got a good heart; I know that; he'll not rob his sister. I lay it on him, now I'm dying, to be patient with her, and look after her. She's not like other children. But it's not her fault; it was born in her. Let him see her married to a decent man, and then give her what's honestly hers. That little lad has nursed me like a woman since I've been ill. He was always a good lad to me, and I'd like him to know when he's grown up that his father loved him——'

But here the poor laboured scrawl came to an end, save for a few incoherent strokes. David thrust it back into his pocket. His cheek was red; his eyes burnt; he sat for long, with his elbows on his knees, staring at the February river. The choking, passionate impulse

to comfort his father he had felt so often as a child was there again, by association, alive and piteous.

Suddenly he woke up with a start. There, to either hand, lay the bridges, with the moving figures atop and the hurrying river below. And from one of them his mother had leapt when she destroyed herself. In the trance of thought that followed, it was to him as though he felt her wild nature, her lawless blood, stirring within him, and realised, in a fierce, reluctant way, that he was hers as well as his father's. In a sense, he shared Reuben's hatred; for he, best of all, knew what she had made his father suffer. Yet the thought of her drew his restless curiosity after it. Where did she come from? Who were her kindred? From the south of France, Reuben thought. The lad's imagination travelled with difficulty and excitement to the far and alien land whence half his being had sprung. A few scraps of poetry and history recurred to him—a single tattered volume of 'Monte Cristo,' which he had lately bought with an odd lot at a sale—but nothing that suggested to his fancy anything like the peasant farm in the Mont Ventoux, within sight of Arles, where Louise Suveret's penurious childhood had been actually cradled.

Two o'clock struck from the belfry of St. Paul's, looming there to his left in the great bend of the river. At the sound he shook off all his thoughts. Let him see something of London. He had two hours and a half before his train from Euston. Westminster first—

a hasty glance; then an omnibus to St. Paul's, that he might look down upon the city and its rush; then north. He had a map with him, and his quick intelligence told him exactly how to use his time to the best advantage. Years afterwards he was accustomed to look back on this hour spent on the top of an omnibus, which was making its difficult way to the Bank through the crowded afternoon streets, as one of the strong impressions of his youth. Here was one centre of things; Westminster represented another; and both stood for knowledge, wealth, and power. The boy's hot blood rose to the challenge. His foot was on the ladder, and many men with less chances than he had risen to the top. At this moment, small Manchester tradesman that he was, he had the constant presentiment of a wide career.

That night he let himself into his own door somewhere about nine o'clock. What had Louie been doing with herself all day? She was to have her first lesson from Dora Lomax; but she must have been dull since, unless Dora had befriended her.

To his astonishment, as he shut the door he heard voices in the kitchen—Louie and *John*. John, the shy, woman-hating creature, who had received the news of Louie's expected advent in a spirit of mingled irritation and depression—who, after his first startled look at her as she passed through the shop, seemed to David to have fled the sight of her whenever it was possible!

Louie was talking so fast and laughing so much that neither of them had heard David's latchkey, and in his surprise the brother stood still a moment in the dark, looking round the kitchen-door, which stood a little open. Louie was sitting by the fire with some yards of flowered cotton stuff on her knee, at which she was sewing ; John was opposite to her on the oak stool, crouched over a box of nails, from which he was laboriously sorting out those of a certain size, apparently at her bidding, for she gave him sharp directions from time to time. But his toil was intermittent, for whenever her sallies were louder or more amusing than usual his hand paused, and he sat staring at her, his small eyes expanding, a sympathetic grin stealing over his mouth.

It seemed to David that she was describing her lover of the winter ; he caught her gesture as she illustrated her performance with Jim Wigson—the boxing of the amorous lout's ears in the lane by the Dye Works. Her beautiful curly black hair was combed to-night into a sort of wild halo round her brow and cheeks, and in this arrangement counteracted the one fault of the face—a slightly excessive length from forehead to chin. But the brilliance of the eyes, the redness of the thin lips over the small and perfect teeth, the flush on the olive cheek, the slender neck, the distinction and delicacy of every sweeping line and curve—for the first time even David realised, as he stood there in the dark, that his sister was an extraordinary beauty. Strange ! Her manner and voice had neither

natural nor acquired refinement; and yet in the moulding of the head and face there was a dignity and perfection—a touch, as it were, of the grand style—which marked her out in a northern crowd and rivetted the northern eye. Was it the trace of another national character, another civilisation, longer descended, less mixed, more deeply graven than ours?

But what was that idiot John doing here?—the young master wanted to know. He coughed loudly and hung up his hat and his stick, to let them hear that he was there. The pair in the kitchen started. Louie sprang up, flung down her work, and ran out to him.

‘Well,’ said she breathlessly, ‘have you got it?’

‘Yes.’

She gave a little shriek of excitement.

‘Show it then.’

‘There’s nothing to show but a cheque. It’s all right. Is there anything for supper?’

‘There’s some bread and cheese and cold apple-pie in there,’ said Louie, annoyed with him already; then, turning her head over her shoulder, ‘Mr. Dalby, I’ll trouble you to get them out.’

With awkward alacrity John flew to do her bidding. When the lad had ransacked the cupboard and placed all the viands it contained on the table, he looked at David. That young man, with a pucker in his brow, was standing by the fire with his hands in his pockets, making short answers to Louie’s sharp and numerous questions.

‘That’s all I can find,’ said John. ‘Shall I run for something?’

‘Thanks,’ said David, still frowning, and sat him down, ‘that ’ll do.’

Louie made a face at John behind her brother’s back. The assistant slowly flushed a deep red. In this young fellow, with his money buttoned on his breast, both he and Louie for the first time realised the master.

‘Well, good night,’ he said, hesitating, ‘I’m going.’

David jumped up and went with him into the passage.

‘Look here,’ he said abruptly, ‘you and I have got some business to talk to-morrow. I’m not going to keep you slaving here for nothing now that I can afford to pay you.’

‘Are you going to turn me off?’ said the other hastily.

David laughed. The cloud had all cleared from his brow.

‘Don’t be such a precious fool!’ he said. ‘Now be off—and seven sharp. I must go at it like ten horses to-morrow.’

John disappeared into the night, and David went back to his sister. He found her looking red and excited, and sewing energetically.

‘Look here!’ she said, lifting a threatening eye to him as he entered the room. ‘I’m not going to be treated like a baby. If you don’t tell me all about

that money, I'll write to Mr. Gurney myself. It's part of it mine, and *I'll know*, so there !'

'I'll tell you everything,' he said quietly, putting a hand into his coat pocket before he sat down to his supper again. 'There's the cheque—and there's our father's letter,—what Mr. Gurney gave me. There was no proper will—this was instead.'

He pretended to eat, but in reality he watched her anxiously as she read it. The result was very much what he had expected. She ran breathlessly through it, then, with a look all flame and fury, she broke out—

'Upon my word ! So you're going to take it all, and I'm to be beholden to you for every penny. I'd like to see myself !'

'Now look here, Lonie,' he said, firmly, pushing back his chair from the table, 'I want to explain things to you. I should like to tell you all about my business, and what I think of doing, and then you can judge for yourself. I'll not rob you or anyone.'

Whereupon with a fierce gesture she caught up her work again, and he fell into long and earnest talk, setting his mind to the task. He explained to her that the arrival of this money—this capital—made just all the difference, that the whole of it would be infinitely more useful to him than the half, and that he proposed to employ it both for her benefit and his own. He had already cleared out the commission agent from the first floor, and moved down the lodgers—a young

foreman and his wife—from the attics to the first-floor back. That left the two attics for himself and Louie, and gave him the front first-floor room, the best room in the house, for an extension of stock.

‘Why don’t you turn those people out altogether?’ said Louie, impatiently. ‘They pay very little, and you’ll be wanting that room soon, very like.’

‘Well, I shall get it soon,’ said David bluntly; ‘but I can’t get it now. Mrs. Mason’s bad; she’s going to be confined.’

‘Well, I dare say she is!’ cried Louie. ‘That don’t matter; she isn’t confined yet.’

David looked at her in amazement. Then his face hardened.

‘I’m not going to turn her out, I tell you,’ he said, and immediately returned to his statement. Well, there were all sorts of ways in which he might employ his money. He might put up a shed in the back yard, and get a printing-press. He knew of a press and a very decent fount of type, to be had extremely cheap. John was a capital workman, and between them they might reprint some of the scarce local books and pamphlets, which were always sure of a sale. As to his stock, there were endless possibilities. He knew of a collection of rare books on early America, which belonged to a gentleman at Cheadle. He had been negotiating about them for some time. Now he would close at once; from his knowledge of the market the speculation was a certain one. He

was also inclined to largely increase his stock of foreign books, especially in the technical and scientific direction. There was a considerable opening, he believed, for such books in Manchester ; at any rate, he meant to try for it. And as soon as ever he could he should learn German. There was a fellow—a German clerk—who haunted the Parlour, who would teach him in exchange for English lessons.

So, following a happy instinct, he opened to her all his mind, and talked to her as though they were partners in a firm. The event proved that he could have done nothing better. Very early in his exposition she began to put her wits to his, her irritation dropped, and he was presently astonished at the intelligence she showed. Every element almost in the problems discussed was unfamiliar to her, yet after a while a listener coming in might have thought that she too had been Purcell's apprentice, so nimbly had she gathered up the details involved, so quick she was to see David's points and catch his phrases. If there was no moral fellowship between them, judging from to-night, there bade fair to be a comradeship of intelligence.

'There now,' he said, when he had come to the end of his budget, 'you leave your half of the money to me. Mind, I agree it's your half, and I'll do the best I can with it. I'll pay you interest on it for two years, and I'll keep you. Then we'll see. And if you want to improve yourself a bit, instead of going to work at

once, I'll pay for teachers. And look here, we'll keep good friends over it.'

His keen eyes softened to a charming, half-melancholy smile. Louie took no notice; she was absorbed in meditation; and at the end of it, she said with a long breath—

'Well, you may have it, and I'll keep an eye on the accounts. But you needn't think I'll sit at home "improving" myself! Not I. I'll do that church-work. That girl gave me a lesson this morning, and I'm going again to-morrow.'

David received the news with satisfaction, remarking heartily that Dora Lomax was a real good sort, and if it weren't for her the Parlour and Daddy would soon be in a fix. He told the story of the Parlour, dwelling on Dora's virtues.

'But she is a crank, though!' said Louie. 'Why, if you make free with her things a bit, or if you call 'em by the wrong names, she'll fly at you! How's anybody to know what they're meant for?'

David laughed, and got up to get some books he was repairing. As he moved away he looked back a moment.

'I say, Louie,' he began, hesitating. 'that fellow John's worked for me like a dozen, and has never taken a farthing from me. Don't you go and make a fool of him.'

A flush passed over Louie's face. She lifted her

hand and tucked away some curly ends of long hair that had fallen on her shoulders.

‘He’s like one of Aunt Hannah’s suet rolies,’ she said, after a minute, with a gleam of her white teeth. ‘Seems as if some one had tied him in a cloth and boiled him that shape.’

Neither of them cared to go to bed. They sat up talking. David was mending, sorting, and pricing a number of old books he had bought for nothing at a country sale. He knew enough of bookbinding to do the repairing with much skill, showing the same neatness of finger in it that he had shown years ago in the carving of toy boats and water-wheels. Louie went on with her work, which proved to be a curtain for her attic. She meant to have that room nice, and she had been out buying a few things, whereby David understood—as indeed Reuben had said—that she had some savings. Moreover, with regard to certain odd jobs of carpentering, she had already pressed John into her service, which explained his lingering after hours, and his eagerness among the nails. As to the furniture David had bought for her, on which, in the intervals of his busy days, he had spent some time and trouble, and of which he was secretly proud, humble and cheap as it was—she took it for granted. He could not remember that she had said any ‘thank you’s’ since she came.

Still, youth and comradeship were pleasant. The

den in which they sat was warm with light and fire, and was their own. Louie's exultation, too, in their change of fortune, which flashed out of her at every turn, was infectious, and presently his spirits rose with hers, and the two lost themselves in the excitement of large schemes and new horizons.

After a time he found himself comparing notes with her as to that far-off crisis of his running away.

'I suppose you heard somehow about Jim Wigson and me?' he asked her, his pulse quickening after all these years.

She nodded with a little grin. He had already noticed, by the way, that she, while still living among the moors, had almost shaken herself free of the Kinder dialect, whereas it had taken quite a year of Manchester life to rub off his own Doric.

'Well, you didn't imagine'—he went on—'I was going to stop after that? I could put a knife between Jim's ribs now when I think of it!'

And, pushing his book away from him, he sat recalling that long past shame, his face, glowing with vindictive memory, framed in his hands.

'I don't see, though, what you sneaked off for like that after all you'd promised me,' she said with energy.

'No, it was hard on you,' he admitted. 'But I couldn't think of any other way out. I was mad with everybody, and just wanted to cut and run. But before I hit on that notion about Tom' (he had just been explaining to her in detail, not at all to her satisfaction,

his device for getting regular news of her) 'I used to spend half my time wondering what you'd do. I thought, perhaps, you'd run away too, and that would have been a kettle of fish.'

'I did run away,' she said, her wild eyes sparkling — 'twice.'

'Jiminy!' said David with a schoolboy delight, 'let's hear!'

Whereupon she took up her tale and told him a great deal that was still quite unknown to him. She told it in her own way with characteristic blindnesses and hardnesses, but the truth of it was this. The very day after David's departure she too had run away, in spite of the fact that Hannah was keeping her in something very like imprisonment. She supposed that David had gone to Manchester, and she meant to follow him there. But she had been caught begging the other side of Glossop by a policeman, who was a native of Clough End and knew all about her.

'He made me come along back, but he must have got the mark on his wrist still where I bit him, I should think,' remarked Miss Louie, with a satisfaction untouched apparently by the lapse of time.

The next attempt had been more serious. It was some months afterwards, and by this time she was in despair about David, and had made up her passionate mind that she would never see him again. But she loathed Hannah more and more, and at last, in the middle of a snowy February, the child determined to

find her way over the Peak into the wild valley of the Woodlands, and so to Ashopton and Sheffield, in which last town she meant to go to service. But in the effort to cross the plateau of the Peak she very nearly lost her life. Long before she came in sight of the Snake Inn, on the Woodlands side, she sank exhausted in the snow, and, but for some Frimley shepherds who were out after their sheep, she would have drawn her last breath in that grim solitude. They carried her down to Frimley and dropped her at the nearest shelter, which happened to be Margaret Dawson's cottage.

Margaret was then in the first smart of her widowhood. 'Lias was just dead, and she was withering physically and mentally under the heart-hunger of her loss. The arrival of the pallid, half-conscious child — David's sister, with David's eyes — for a time distracted and appeased her. She nursed the poor waif, and sent word to Needham Farm. Reuben came for the girl, and Margaret, partly out of compassion, partly out of a sense of her own decaying strength, bribed her to go back home by the promise of teaching her the silk-weaving.

Louie learnt the trade with surprising quickness, and as she shot up in stature and her fingers gained in cunning and rapidity, Margaret became more bowed, helpless and 'fond,' until at last Louie did everything, brought home the weft and warp, set it up, worked off the 'cuts,' and took them to the warehouse in Clough End to be paid; while Margaret sat in the chimney corner, pining

inwardly for 'Lias and dropping deeper day by day into the gulf of age. By this time of course various money arrangements had been made between them, superintended by Margaret's brother, a weaver in the same village who found it necessary to keep a very sharp eye on this girl-apprentice whom Margaret had picked up. Oflate Louie had been paying Margaret rent for the loom, together with a certain percentage on the weekly earnings, practically for 'goodwill.' And on this small sum the widow had managed to live and keep her home, while Louie launched gloriously into new clothes, started a savings-bank book, and snapped her fingers for good and all at Hannah, who put up with her, however, in a sour silence because of Mr. Gurney's cheques.

'And Margaret can't do *anything* for herself now?' asked David. He had followed the story with eagerness. For years the remembrance had rankled in his mind how during his last months at Kinder, when 'Lias was dying, and the old pair were more in want than ever of the small services he had been accustomed to render them, he had forgotten and neglected his friends because he had been absorbed in the excitements of 'conversion,' so that when Tom Mullins had told him in general terms that his sister Louie was supporting both Margaret and herself, the news had soothed a remorse.

'I should just think not!' said Louie in answer to his question. 'She's gone most silly, and she hasn't got the right use of her legs either.'

‘Poor old thing!’ said David softly, falling into a dream. He was thinking of Margaret in her active, happy days when she used to bake scones for him, or mend his clothes, or rate him for ‘worriting’ Lias. Then wakening up he drew the book he was binding towards him again. ‘She must have been precious glad to have you to do for her, Louie,’ he said contentedly.

‘Do for her?’ Louie opened her eyes. ‘As if I could be worrited with her! I had my work to do, thank you. There was a niece used to come in and see to her. She used to get in my way dreadful sometimes. She’d have fits of thinking she could work the loom again, and I’d have to keep her away—regular *frighten* her.’

David started.

‘Who’ll work the loom now?’ he asked; his look and tone altering to match hers.

‘I’m sure I don’t know,’ said Louie, carelessly. ‘Very like she’ll not get anyone. The work’s been slack a long while.’

David suddenly drew back from his bookbinding.

‘When did you let her know, Louie—about me?’ he asked quickly.

‘Let her know? Who was to let her know? Your letter came eight o’clock and our train started half-past ten. I’d just time to pitch my things together and that was about all.’

‘And you never sent, and you haven’t written?’

‘You leave me alone,’ said the girl, turning instantly

sulky under his tone and look. 'It's nowt to you what I do.'

'Why!' he said, his voice shaking, 'she'd be waiting and waiting—and she's got nothing else to depend on.'

'There's her brother,' said Louie angrily, 'and if he won't take her, there's the workhouse. They'll take her there fast enough, and she won't know anything about it.'

'The *workhouse*!' cried David, springing up, incensed past bearing by her callous way. 'Margaret that took you in out of the snow!—you said it yourself. And you—you'd not lift a finger—not you—you'd not even give her notice—"chuck her into the workhouse—that's good enough for her!" It's *vile*,—that's what it is!'

He stood, choked by his own wrath, eyeing her fiercely—a young thunder god of disdain and condemnation.

Louie too got up—gathering up her work round her—and gave him back his look with interest before she flung out of the room.

'Keep a civil tongue in your head, sir, or I'll let you know,' she cried. 'I'll not be called over the coals by you nor nobody. I'll do what I *please*,—and if you don't like it you can do the other thing—so there—now you know!'

And with a nod of the utmost provocation and defiance she banged the door behind her and went up to bed.

David flung down the pen with which he had been lettering his books on the table, and, drawing a chair up

to the fire, he sat moodily staring into the embers. So it was all to begin again—the long wrangle and jar of their childhood. Why had he broken silence and taken this burden once more upon his shoulders? He had a moment of passionate regret. It seemed to him more than he could bear. No gratitude, no kindness; and this fierce tongue!

After a while he fetched pen and paper and began to write on his knee, while his look kindled again. He wrote to Margaret, a letter of boyish effusion and affection, his own conscience quickened to passion by Louie's lack of conscience. He had never forgotten her, he said, and he wished he could see her again. She must write, or get some one to write for her—and tell him what she was going to do now that Lonie had left her. He had been angry with Louie for coming away without sending word. But what he wanted to say was this: if Margaret could get no one to work the loom, he, David, would pay her brother four shillings a week, for six months certain, towards her expenses if he would take her in and look after her. She must ask somebody to write at once and say what was to be done. If her brother consented to take her, David would send a post office-order for the first month at once. He was doing well in his business, and there would be no doubt about the payments.

He made his proposal with a haste and impulsiveness very unlike the cool judgment he had so far shown in his business. It never occurred to him to

negotiate with the brother who might be quite well able to maintain his sister without help. Besides he remembered him as a hard man of whom both Margaret and 'Lias—soft, sensitive creatures—were both more or less afraid. No, there should be no doubt about it—not a day's doubt, if he could help it! He could help, and he would; and if they asked him more he would give it. Nearly midnight! But if he ran out to the General Post Office it would be in time.

When he had posted it and was walking home, his anger was all gone. But in its stead was the smart of a baffled instinct—the hunger for sympathy, for love, for that common everyday life of the affections which had never been his, while it came so easily to other people.

In his chafing distress he felt the curb of something unknown before; or, rather, what had of late taken the pleasant guise of kinship and natural affection assumed to-night another and a sterner aspect, and in this strait of conduct, that sheer 'imperative' which we carry within us made itself for the first time heard and realised.

'I have done my duty and must abide by it. I *must* bear with her and look after her.'

Why?

'Because my father laid it on me?'—

And because there is a life within our life which urges and presses?—because we are 'not our own'? But this is an answer which implies a whole theology.

And at this moment of his life David had not a particle or shred of theology about him. Except, indeed, that, like Voltaire, he was graciously inclined to think a First Cause probable.

Next day this storm blew over, as storms do. Louie came down early and made the porridge for breakfast. When David appeared she carried things off with a high hand, and behaved as if nothing had happened ; but anyone accustomed to watch her would have seen a certain quick nervousness in her black, wild bird's eyes. As for David, after a period of gruffness and silence, he passed by degrees into his usual manner. Louie spent the day with Dora, and he went off to Cheadle to conclude the purchase of that collection of American books he had described to Louie. But first, on his way, he walked proudly into Heywood's bank and opened an account there, receiving the congratulations of an old and talkative cashier, who already knew the lad and was interested in his prospects, with the coolness of one who takes good fortune as his right.

In the afternoon he was busy in the shop—not too busy, however, to notice John. What ailed the lad ? While he was inside, as soon as the door did but creak in the wind he sprang to open it, but for the most part he preferred to stand outside watching the stall and the street. When Louie appeared about five o'clock—for her hours with Dora were not yet regular—he forthwith

became her slave. She set him to draw up the fire while she got the tea, and then, without taking any notice of David, she marched John upstairs to help her hang her curtains, lay her carpet, and nail up the coloured fashion plates and newspaper prints of royalties or beauties with which she was adorning the bare walls of the attic.

When all her additions had been made to David's original stock; when the little deal dressing-table and glass had been draped in the cheapest of muslins over the pinkest of calicoes; when the flowery curtains had been tied back with blue ribbons; when the china vases on the mantelpiece had been filled with nodding plumes of dyed grasses, mostly of a rosy red; and a long glass in a somewhat damaged condition, but still presenting enough surface to enable Miss Louie to study herself therein from top to toe, had been propped against the wall; there was and could be nothing in the neighbourhood of Potter Street, so John reflected, as he furtively looked about him, to vie with the splendours of Miss Grieve's apartment. There was about it a sensuousness, a deliberate quest of luxury and gaiety, which a raw son of poverty could feel though he could not put it into words. No Manchester girl he had ever seen would have cared to spend her money in just this way.

'Now that 's real nice, Mr. Dalby, and I'm just obliged to you,' said Louie, with patronising emphasis, as she looked round upon his labours. 'I do like to

get a man to do things for you—he's got some strength in him—not like a gell !'

And she looked down at herself and at the long, thin-fingered hand against her dress, with affected contempt. John looked at her too, but turned his head away again quickly.

'And yet you 're pretty strong too, Miss,' he ventured.

'Well, perhaps I am,' she admitted; 'and a good thing too, when you come to think of the rough time I had over there'—and she jerked her head behind her—'ever since Davy ran away from me.'

'Ran away from you, Miss?'

She nodded, pressing her lips together with the look of one who keeps a secret from the highest motives. But she brought two beautiful plaintive eyes to bear on John, and he at once felt sure that David's conduct had been totally inexcusable.

Then suddenly she broke into a laugh. She was sitting on the edge of the bed, swinging her feet lightly backwards and forwards.

'Look here!' she said, dropping her voice, and looking round at the door. 'Do you know a lot about Davy's affairs?—you 're a great friend of his, aren't you?'

'I s'pose so,' said the lad, awkwardly.

'Well, has he been making up to anybody that you know of?'

John's invisible eyebrows stretched considerably.

He was so astonished that he did not readily find an answer.

‘Why, of course, I mean,’ said Louie, impatiently, ‘is he *in love* with anybody?’

‘Not that I know of, Miss.’

‘Well, then, there’s somebody in love with *him*,’ said Louie, maliciously; ‘and some day, Mr. Dalby, if we get a chance, perhaps I’ll tell you all about it.’

The charming confidential smile she threw him so bewildered the lad that he hardly knew where he was.

But an exasperated shout of ‘John’ from the stairs recalled him, and he rushed downstairs to help David deal with a cargo of books just arrived.

That evening David ran up to the Parlour for half an hour, to have a talk with Daddy and find out what Dora thought of Louie. He had sent a message by Louie about Reuben’s revelations, and it occurred to him that since Daddy had not been to look him up since, that incalculable person might be offended that he had not brought his great news in person. Besides, he had a very strong curiosity to know what had happened after all to Lucy Purcell, and whether anything had been commonly observed of Purcell’s demeanour under the checkmate administered to him. For the past few days he had been wholly absorbed in his own affairs, and during the previous week he had seen nothing of either Daddy or Dora, except that at

a casual meeting in the street with Daddy that worthy had described his attack on Purcell with a gusto worthy of his Irish extraction.

He found the restaurant just shutting, and Daddy apparently on the wing for the 'White Horse' parlour, to judge from the relief which showed in Dora's worn look as she saw her father lay down his hat and stick again and fall 'chaffing' with David.

For, with regard to David's change of position, the landlord of the Parlour was in a very testy frame of mind.

'Six hundred pounds!' he growled, when the young fellow sitting cross-legged by the fire had made an end of describing to them both his journey to London. 'H'm, *your* fun's over: any fool can do on six hundred pounds!'

'Thank you, Daddy,' said the lad, with a sarcastic lip. 'As for you, I wonder *you* have the face to talk! Who's coining money here, I should like to know?'

Dora looked up with a start. Her father met her look with a certain hostility and an obstinate shake of his thin shoulders.

'Davy, me boy, you're that consated by now, you'll not be for taking advice. But I'll give it you, bedad, to take or to leave! Never pitch your tent, sir, where you can't strike it when you want to! But there's where your beastly money comes in. Nobody need look to you now for any comprehension of the finer sentiments of man.'

‘What do you mean, Daddy?’

‘Never you mind,’ said the old vagrant, staring sombrely at the floor—the spleen in person. ‘Only I want my *freedom*, I tell you—and a bit of air, sometimes – and by gad I’ll have ’em!’

And throwing back his grey head with a jerk he fixed an angry eye on Dora. Dora had grown paler, but she said nothing; her fingers went steadily on with her work; from early morning now till late night neither they nor she were ever at rest. After a minute’s silence Lomax walked to the door, flung a good-night behind him and disappeared.

Dora hastily drew her hand across her eyes, then threaded her needle as though nothing had happened. But David was perplexed and sorry. How white and thin she looked, to be sure! That old lunatic must be worrying her somehow.

He moved his chair nearer to Dora.

‘Is there anything wrong, Miss Dora?’ he asked her, dropping his voice.

She looked up with a quick gratitude, his voice and expression putting a new life into her.

‘Oh! I don’t know,’ she said, gently and sadly. ‘Father’s been very restless these last few weeks. I can’t keep him at home. And I’m not always dull like this. I’ve done my best to cheer him up. And I don’t think there’s much amiss with the Parlour—yet—only the outgoings are so large every day. I’m always feeart——’

She paused, and a visible tremor ran through her. David's quick eye understood the signs of strain and fatigue, and he felt a brotherly pity for her—a softer, more normal feeling than Louie had ever called out in him.

‘I say,’ he said heartily, ‘if there’s anything I can do, you’ll let me know, won’t you?’

She smiled at him, and then turned to her work again in a hurry, afraid of her own eyes and lips, and what they might be saying.

‘Oh! I dare say I fret myself too much,’ she said, with the tone of one determined to be cheered. And, by way of protecting her own quivering heart, she fell upon the subject of Louie. She showed the brother some of Louie’s first attempts—some of the stitches she had been learning.

‘She’s that quick!’ she said, wondering. ‘In a few days I’m going to trust her with that,’ and she pointed to a fine old piece of Venetian embroidery, which had to be largely repaired before it could be made up into an altar-cloth and presented to St. Damian’s by a rich and devoted member of the congregation.

‘Does she get in your way?’ the brother inquired.

‘N-o,’ she said in a low voice, paying particular attention to a complicated stitch. ‘She’ll get used to me and the work soon. She’ll make a first-rate hand if she’s patient a bit. They’ll be glad to take her on at the shop.’

‘But you’ll not turn her out? You’ll let her work

here, alongside of you?' said the young man eagerly. He had just met Louie, in the dark, walking up Market Street with a seedy kind of gentleman, who he had reason to know was a bad lot. John was off his head about her, and no longer of much use to anybody, and in these few days other men, as it seemed to him, had begun to hang about. The difficulties of his guardianship were thickening upon him, and he clung to Dora's help.

'No; I'll not turn her out. She may work here if she wants to,' said Dora, with the same slowness.

And all the time she was saying to herself passionately that, if Louie Grieve had not been his sister, she should *never* have set foot in that room again! In the two days they had been together Louie had outraged almost every feeling the other possessed. And there was a burning dread in Dora's mind that even the secret of her heart of hearts had been somehow discovered by the girl's hawk-like sense. But she had promised to help him, and she would.

'You must let me know what I owe you for teaching her and introducing her,' said David firmly. 'Yes, you must, Miss Dora. It's business, and you mustn't make any bones about it. A girl doesn't learn a trade and get an opening found her for nothing.'

'Oh no, nonsense!' she said quickly, but with decision equal to his own. 'I won't take anything. She don't want much teaching; she's so clever; she sees a thing almost before the words are out of your mouth.'

Look here, Mr. Grieve, I want to tell you about Lucy.'

She looked up at him, flushing. He, too, coloured.

'Well,' he said; 'that's what I wanted to ask you.'

She told him the whole story of Lucy's flight from her father, of her illness and departure, of the probable stepmother.

'Old brute!' said David between his teeth. 'I say, Miss Dora, can nothing be done to make him treat her decently?'

His countenance glowed with indignation and disgust. Dora shook her head sadly.

'I don't see what anyone can do; and the worst of it is she'll be such a long while getting over it. I've had a letter from her this morning, and she says the Hastings doctor declares she must stay there a year in the warm and not come home at all, or she'll be going off in a decline. I know Lucy gets nervous about herself, but it do seem bad.'

David sat silent, lost in a medley of feelings, most of them unpleasant. Now that Lucy Purcell was at the other end of England, both her service to him and his own curmudgeon behaviour to her loomed doubly large.

'I say, will you give me her address?' he said at last. 'I've got a smart book I've had bound for her. I'd like to send it her.'

Dora went to the table and wrote it for him. Then he got up to go.

‘Upon my word, you do look tired,’ he broke out.
‘Can’t you go to bed? It is hard lines.’

Which last words applied to that whole situation of hers with her father which he was beginning dimly to discern. In his boyish admiration and compassion he took both her hands in his. Dora withdrew them quickly.

‘Oh, I’ll pull through!’ she said, simply, and he went.

When she had closed the door after him she stood looking at the clock with her hands clasped in front of her.

‘How much longer will father be?’ she said, sighing. ‘Oh, I think I told him all Lucy wanted me to say; I think I did.’

CHAPTER X

THREE or four months passed away. During that period David had built up a shed in his back yard and had established a printing-press there, with a respectable, though not extensive, fount of type—bought, all of it, secondhand, and a bargain. John and he spent every available moment there, and during their first experiments would often sit up half the night working off the sheets of their earliest productions, in an excitement which took no count of fatigue. They began with reprinting some scarce local tracts, with which they did well. Then David diverged into a Radical pamphlet or two on the subject of the coming Education Bill, finding authors for them among the leading ministers of the town; and these timely wares, being freely pushed on the stall, on the whole paid their expenses, with a little profit to spare—the labour being reckoned at nothing. And now David was beginning to cherish the dream of a new history of Manchester, for which among his own collections he already possessed a great deal of fresh material. But that would take time and money. He must push his business a bit further first.

That business, however, was developing quite as rapidly as the two pairs of arms could keep pace with it. Almost everything the young fellow touched succeeded. He had instinct, knowledge, a growing tact, and an indomitable energy, and these are the qualities which make, which are in themselves, success. The purchase of the collection at Cheadle, bearing on the early history of American states and towns, not only turned out well in itself, but brought him to the notice of a big man in London, who set the clever and daring beginner on several large quests both in Lancashire and Yorkshire by which both profited considerably. In another direction he was extending his stock of foreign scientific and technical books, especially such as bore upon the industries of Northern England. Old Barbier, who took a warmer and warmer interest in his pupil's progress, kept him constantly advised as to French books through old friends of his own in Paris, who were glad to do the exile a kindness.

‘But why not run over to Paris for yourself, form some connections, and look about you?’ suggested Barbier.

Why not, indeed? The young man's blood, quick with curiosity and adventure, under all his tradesman's exterior, leapt at the thought. But prudence restrained him for the present.

As for German books, he was struggling with the language, and feeling his way besides through innumerable catalogues. How he found time for all the miscel-

laneous acquisitions of these months it would be difficult to say. But whether in his free times or in trade-hours he was hardly ever without a book or a catalogue beside him, save when he was working the printing press; and, although his youth would every now and then break out against the confinement he imposed upon it, and drive him either to long tramps over the moors on days when the spring stirred in the air, or to a spell of theatre-going, in which Louie greedily shared, yet, on the whole, his force of purpose was amazing, and the success which it brought with it could only be regarded as natural and inevitable. He was beginning to be well known to the old-established men in his own business, who could not but show at times some natural jealousy of so quick a rise. The story of his relations to Purcell spread, and the two were watched with malicious interest at many a book-sale, when the nonchalant self-reliance and prosperous look of the younger drove the elder man again and again into futile attempts to injure and circumvent him. It was noticed that never till now had Purcell lost his head with a rival.

Nevertheless, the lad had far fewer enemies than might have been expected. His manner had always been radiantly self-confident; but there was about him a conspicuous element of quick feeling, of warm humanity, which grew rather than diminished with his success. He was frank, too, and did not try to gloss over a mistake or a failure. Perhaps in his lordly way

he felt he could afford himself a few now and then, he was so much cleverer than his neighbours.

Upon no one did David's development produce more effect than upon Mr. Ancrum. The lame, solitary minister, who only got through his week's self-appointed tasks at a constant expense of bodily torment, was dazzled and bewildered by the spectacle of so much vitality spent with such ease and impunity.

'How many years of Manchester must one give him?' said Ancrum to himself one night, when he was making his way home from a reading of the 'Electra' with David. 'That six hundred pounds has quickened the pace amazingly! Ten years, perhaps. Then London, and anything you like. Bookselling slips into publishing, and publishing takes a man into another class, and within reach of a hundred new possibilities. Some day I shall be bragging of having taught him! *Taught* him! He'll be turning the tables on me precious soon. Caught me out twice to-night, and got through the tough bit of the chorus much better than I did. How does he do it?—and with that mountain of other things on his shoulders! There's *one* speck in the fruit, however, as far as I can see—Miss Louie!'

From the first moment of his introduction to her, Ancrum had taken particular notice of David's handsome sister, who, on her side, had treated her old minister and teacher with a most thoroughgoing in-

difference. He saw that now, after some three months of life together, the brother and sister had developed separate existences, which touched in two points only—a common liking for Dora Lomax, and a common keenness for business.

Here, in this matter of business, they were really at one. David kept nothing from her, and consulted her a good deal. She had the same shrewd head that he had, and as it was her money as well as his that was in question she was determined to know and to understand what he was after. Anybody who had come upon the pair on the nights when they made up their accounts, their dark heads touching under the lamp, might have gone away moralising on the charms of fraternal affection.

And all the while David had once more tacitly given up the attempt either to love her or to control her. How indeed could he control her? He was barely two years older, and she had a will of iron. She made disreputable friends whom he loathed the sight of. But all he could do was to keep them out of the house. She led John by this time a dog's life. From the temptress she had become the tease and tyrant, and the clumsy fellow, consumed with feverish passion, slaved for her whenever she was near him with hardly the reward of a kind look or a civil word in a fortnight. David set his teeth and tried to recover possession of his friend. And as long as they two were at the press or in the shop together alone, John was often his old self, and

would laugh out in the old way. But no sooner did Louie appear than he followed her about like an animal, and David could make no more of him. Whenever any dispute, too, arose between the brother and sister, he took her part, whatever it might be, with an acrimony which pushed David's temper hard.

Yet, on the whole, so Ancrum thought, the brother showed a wonderful patience. He was evidently haunted by a sense of responsibility towards his sister, and, at the same time, both tormented and humiliated by his incompetence to manage or influence her. It was curious, too, to watch how by antagonism and by the constant friction of their life together, certain qualities in her developed certain others in him. Her callousness, for instance, did but nurture a sensitive humanity in him. She treated the lodgers in the first pair back with persistent indifference and even brutality, seeing that Mrs. Mason was a young, helpless creature approaching every day nearer to a confinement she regarded with terror, and that a little common kindness from the only other woman in the house could have softened her lot considerably. But David's books were stacked about in awkward and inconvenient places waiting for the Masons' departure, and Louie had no patience with them—with the wife at any rate. It once or twice occurred to David that if the husband, a good-looking fellow and a very hard-worked shopman, had had more hours at home, Louie would have tried her blandishments upon him.

He on his side was goaded by Louie's behaviour into an unusual complaisance and liberality towards his tenants. Louie once contemptuously told him he would make a capital 'general help.' He was Mrs. Mason's coal-carrier and errand-boy already.

In the same way Louie beat and ill-treated a half-starved collie—one of the short-haired black sort familiar to the shepherd of the north, and to David himself in his farm days—which would haunt the shop and kitchen. Whereupon David felt all his heart melt towards the squalid, unhandsome creature. He fed and cherished it; it slept on his bed by night and followed him by day, he all the while protecting it from Louie with a strong hand. And the more evil was the eye she cast upon the dog, who, according to her, possessed all the canine vices, the more David loved it, and the more Tim was fattened and caressed.

In another direction, too, the same antagonism appeared. The sister's license of speech and behaviour towards the men who became her acquaintances provoked in the brother what often seemed to Ancrum—who, of course, remembered Reuben, and had heard many tales of old James Grieve, the lad's grandfather—a sort of Puritan reaction, the reaction of his race and stock against 'lewdness.' Louie's complete independence, however, and the distance she preserved between his amusements and hers, left David no other weapon than sarcasm, which he employed freely. His fine sensitive mouth took during these weeks a curve half

mocking, half bitter, which changed the whole expression of the face.

He saw, indeed, with great clearness after a month or so that Louie's wildness was by no means the wildness of an ignorant innocent, likely to slip unawares into perdition, and that, while she had a passionate greed for amusement and pleasure, and a blank absence of principle, she was still perfectly alive to the risks of life, and meant somehow both to enjoy herself and to steer herself through. But this gradual perception—that, in spite of her mode of killing spare time, she was not immediately likely to take any fatal false step, as he had imagined in his first dread—did but increase his inward repulsion.

A state of feeling which was the more remarkable because he himself, in Ancrum's eyes, was at the moment in a temper of moral relaxation and bewilderment! His absorption in George Sand, and through her in all the other French Romantics whose books he could either find for himself or borrow from Barbier, was carrying a ferment of passion and imagination through all his blood. Most social arrangements, including marriage, seemed to have become open questions to him. Why, then, this tone towards Louie and her friends? Was it that, apart from the influence of heredity, the young fellow's moral perception at this time was not ethical at all, but æsthetic—a matter of taste, of the presence or absence of certain ideal and poetic elements in conduct?

At any rate his friendship for old Barbier drew closer and closer, and Ancrum, who had begun to feel a lively affection for him, could see but little of him.

As to Barbier, it was a significant chance which had thrown him across David's path. In former days this lively Frenchman had been a small Paris journalist, whom the *coup d'état* had struck down with his betters, and who had escaped to England with one suit of clothes and eight francs in his pocket. He reminded himself on landing of a cousin of his mother's settled as a clerk in Manchester, found his way northwards, and had now, for some seventeen years, been maintaining himself in the cotton capital, mainly by teaching, but partly by a number of small arts—ornamental calligraphy, *menu*-writing, and the like—too odd and various for description. He was a fanatic, a Red, much possessed by political hatreds which gave savour to an existence otherwise dull and peaceable enough. Religious beliefs were very scarce with him, but he had a certain literary creed, the creed of 1830, when he had been a scribbler in the train of Victor Hugo, which he did his best to put into David.

He was a formidable-looking person, six feet in height, and broad in proportion, with bushy white eyebrows, and a mouth made hideous by two projecting teeth. In speech he hated England and all her ways, and was for ever yearning towards the misguided and yet unequalled country which had cast him out. In heart he was perfectly aware that England is

free as not even Republican France is free ; and he was also sufficiently alive to the fact that he had made himself a very tolerable niche in Manchester, and was pleasantly regarded there—at least, in certain circles—as an oracle of French opinion, a commodity which, in a great commercial centre, may at any time have a cash value. He could, in truth, have long ago revisited *la patrie* had he had a mind, for governments are seldom vindictive in the case of people who can clearly do them no harm. This, however, was not at all his own honest view of the matter. In the mirror of the mind he saw himself perpetually draped in the pathos of exile and the dignity of persecution, and the phrases by which he was wont to impress this inward vision on the brutal English sense had become, in the course of years, an effective and touching habit with him.

David had been Barbier's pupil in the first instance at one of the classes of the Mechanics' Institute. Never in Barbier's memory had any Manchester lad so applied himself to learn French before. And when the boy's knowledge of the Encyclopædists came out, and he one day put the master right in class on some points connected with Diderot's relations to Rousseau, the ex-journalist gaped with astonishment, and then went home and read up his facts, half enraged and half enraptured. David's zeal piqued him, made him a better Frenchman and a better teacher than he had been for years. He was a vain man, and David's capacities put him on his mettle.

Very soon he and the lad had become intimate. He had described to David the first night of *Hernani*, when he had been one of the long-haired band of *rapins*, who came down in their scores to the Théâtre Français to defend their chief, Hugo, against the hisses of the Philistine. The two were making coffee in Barbier's attic, at the top of a side street off the Oxford Road, when these memories seized upon the old Romantic. He took up the empty coffee-pot, and brandished it from side to side as though it had been the sword of *Hernani*; the miserable Academy hugging its Molière and Racine fled before him; the world was once more regenerate, and Hugo its high priest. Passages from the different parts welled to his old lips; he gave the play over again—the scene between the lover and the husband, where the husband lays down the strange and sinister penalty to which the lover submits—the exquisite love-scene in the fifth act—and the cry of agonised passion with which Doña Sol defends her love against his executioner. All these things he declaimed, stumping up and down, till the terrified landlady rose out of her bed to remonstrate, and got the door locked in her face for her pains, and till the *bourgeois* baby in the next room woke up and roared, and so put an abrupt end to the performance. Old Barbier sat down swearing, poked the fire furiously, and then, taking out a huge red handkerchief, wiped his brow with a trembling hand. His stiff white hair, parted on either temple, bristled like a high *toupie*

over his round, black eyes, which glowed behind his spectacles. And meanwhile the handsome boy sat opposite, glad to laugh by way of reaction, but at bottom stirred by the same emotion, and ready to share in the same adorations.

Gradually David learnt his way about this bygone world of Barbier's recollection. A vivid picture sprang up in him of these strange leaders of a strange band, these cadaverous poets and artists of Louis Philippe's early days,—beings in love with Lord Byron and suicide, having Art for God, and Hugo for prophet, talking of were-wolves, vampires, cathedrals, sunrises, forests, passion and despair, hatted like brigands, cloaked after Vandyke, curled like Absalom, making new laws unto themselves in verse as in morals, and leaving all petty talk of duty or common sense to the Academy and the nursery.

George Sand walking the Paris quays in male dress—George Sand at Fontainebleau roaming the midnight forest with Alfred de Musset, or wintering with her dying musician among the mountains of Palma; Gérard de Nerval, wanderer, poet, and suicide; Alfred de Musset flaming into verse at dead of night amid an answering and spendthrift blaze of wax candles; Baudelaire's blasphemies and eccentricities—these characters and incidents Barbier wove into endless highly coloured tales, to which David listened with perpetual relish.

'*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* What times! What memories!' the old Frenchman would cry at last,

fairly re-transported to the world of his youth, and, springing up, he would run to the little cupboard by his bed head, where he kept a score or so of little paper volumes—volumes which the tradesman David soon discovered, from a curious study of French catalogues, to have a fast-rising money value—and out would come Alfred de Musset's '*Nuit de Mai*,' or an outrageous verse from Baudelaire, or an harmonious nothing from Gautier. David gradually learnt to follow, to understand, to range all that he heard in a mental setting of his own. The France of his imagination indeed was a strange land! Everybody in it was either girding at priests like Voltaire, or dying for love like George Sand's Sténio.

But whether the picture was true to life or no, it had a very strongly marked effect on the person conceiving it. Just as the speculative complexion of his first youth had been decided by the chance which brought him into daily contact with the French eighteenth century—for no self-taught solitary boy of quick and covetous mind can read Voltaire continuously without bearing the marks of him henceforward—so in the same way, when he passed, as France had done before him, from the philosophers to the Romantics, this constant preoccupation with the French literature of passion in its romantic and idealist period left deep and lasting results.

The strongest of these results lay in the realm of moral and social sense. What struck the lad's raw

mind with more and more force as he gathered his French books about him was the profound gulf which seemed to divide the average French conception of the relation between the sexes from the average English one. In the French novels he read every young man had his mistress; every married woman her lover. Tragedy frequently arose out of these relations, but that the relations must and did obtain, as a matter of course, was assumed. For the delightful heroes and heroines of a whole range of fiction, from 'Manon Lescaut' down to Murger's 'Vie de Bohème,' marriage did not apparently exist, even as a matter of argument. And as to the duties of the married woman, when she passed on to the canvas, the code was equally simple. The husband might kill his wife's lover—that was in the game; but the young man's right to be was as good as his own. '*No human being can control love, and no one is to blame either for feeling it or for losing it. What alone degrades a woman is falsehood.*' So says the husband in George Sand's 'Jacques' when he is just about to fling himself down an Alpine precipice that his wife and Octave may have their way undisturbed. And all the time, what poetry and passion in the presentation of these things! Beside them the mere remembrance of English ignorance, prudishness, and conventionality would set the lad swelling, as he read, with a sense of superior scorn, and of wild sympathy for a world in which love and not law, truth and not legal fiction, were masters of human relations.

Some little time after Reuben's visit to him he one day told Barbier the fact of his French descent. Barbier declared that he had always known it, had always realised something in David distinct from the sluggish huckstering English temper. Why, David's mother was from the south of France; his own family came from Carcassonne. No doubt the rich Gascon blood ran in both their veins. *Salut au compatriote!*

Thenceforward there was a greater solidarity between the two than ever. Barbier fell into an incessant gossip of Paris—the Paris of Louis Philippe—reviving memories and ways of speech which had been long dead in him, and leaving on David's mind the impression of a place where life was from morning till night amusement, exhilaration, and seduction; where, under the bright smokeless sky, and amid the stateliest streets and public buildings in Europe, men were always witty and women always attractive.

Meanwhile the course of business during the spring months and the rise of his trade in foreign books rapidly brought the scheme of a visit to France, which had been at first a mere dream and fancy, within the region of practical possibility, and even advantage, for the young bookseller. Two things he was set on. If he went he was determined to go under such conditions as would enable him to see French life—especially French artistic and student life—from the inside. And he saw with some clearness that he would have to take his sister with him.

Against the latter notion Barbier protested vehemently.

‘What do you want to tie yourself to a petticoat for? If you take the girl you will have to look after her. Paris, my boy, let me inform you, is not the best place in the world for *la jeune personne*; and the Paris *rapin* may be an amusing scoundrel, but don’t trust him with young women if you can help it. Leave Mademoiselle Louie at home, and let her mind the shop. Get Mademoiselle Dora or some one to stay with her, or send her to Mademoiselle Dora.’

So said the Frenchman with sharp dictatorial emphasis. What a preposterous suggestion!

‘I can’t stop her coming,’ said David, quietly—‘if she wants to come—and she’ll be sure to want. Besides, I’ll not leave her alone at home, and she’ll not let me send her anywhere—you may be sure of that.’

The Frenchman stared and stormed. David fell silent. Louie was what she was, and it was no use discussing her. At last Barbier, being after all tolerably well acquainted with the lad’s relations to his sister, came to a sudden end of his rhetoric, and began to think out something practicable.

That evening he wrote to a nephew of his living as an artist in the Quartier Montmartre. Some months before Barbier’s vanity had been flattered by an adroit letter from this young gentleman, written, if the truth were known, at a moment when a pecuniary situation, pinched almost beyond endurance, had made it seem

worth while to get his uncle's address out of his widowed mother. Barbier, a bachelor, and a man of some small savings, perfectly understood why he had been approached, and had been none the less extraordinarily glad to hear from the youth. He was a *rapin*? well and good; all the great men had been *rapins* before him. Very likely he had the *rapin's* characteristic vices and distractions. All the world knew what the life meant for nine men out of ten. What was the use of preaching? Youth was youth. Clearly the old man—himself irreproachable—would have been disappointed not to find his nephew a sad dog on personal acquaintance.

‘Tell me, Xavier,’ his letter ran. ‘how to put a young friend of mine in the way of seeing something of Paris and Paris life, more than your fool of a tourist generally sees. He is a bookseller, and will, of course, mind his trade; but he is a young man of taste and intelligence besides, and moreover half French. It would be a pity that he should visit Paris as any *sacré* British Philistine does. Advise me where to place him. He would like to see something of your artist's life. But mind this, young man, he brings a sister with him as handsome as the devil, and not much easier to manage: so if you do advise—no tricks—tell me of something *convenable*.’

A few days later Barbier appeared in Potter Street just after David had put up the shutters, announcing that he had a proposal to make.

David unlocked the shop-door and let him in. Barbier looked round with some amazement on the small stuffy place, piled to bursting by now with books of every kind, which only John's herculean efforts could keep in passable order.

'Why don't you house yourself better—*hein*?' said the Frenchman. 'A business growing like this, and nothing but a den to handle it in!'

'I shall be all right when I get my other room,' said David composedly. 'Couldn't turn out the lodger before. The woman was only confined last week.'

And as he spoke the wailing of an infant and a skurrying of feet were heard upstairs.

'So it seems,' said Barbier, adjusting his spectacles in bewilderment. '*Jésus!* What an affair! What did you permit it for? Why didn't you turn her out in time?'

'I would have turned myself out first,' said David. He was lounging, with his hands in his pockets, against the books; but though his attitude was nonchalant, his tone had a vibrating energy.

'Barbier!'

'Yes.'

'What do women suffer for like that?'

The young man's eyes glowed, and his lips twitched a little, as though some poignant remembrance were at his heart.

Barbier looked at him with some curiosity.

'Ask *le bon Dieu* and Mother Eve, my friend. It lies between them,' said the old scoffer, with a shrug.

David looked away in silence. On his quick mind, greedy of all human experience, the night of Mrs. Mason's confinement, with its sounds of anguish penetrating through all the upper rooms of the thin, ill-built house, had left an ineffaceable impression of awe and terror. In the morning, when all was safely over, he came down to the kitchen to find the husband—a man some two or three years older than himself, and the smart foreman of an ironmongery shop in Deansgate—crouching over a bit of fire. The man was too much excited to apologise for his presence in the Grieves' room. David shyly asked him a question about his wife.

'Oh, it's all right, the doctor says. There's the nurse with her, and your sister's got the baby. She'll do; but, oh, my God! it's awful—it's awful! My poor Liz! Give me a corner here, will you! I'm all upset like.'

David had got some food out of the cupboard, made him eat it, and chatted to him till the man was more himself again. But the crying of the new-born child overhead, together with the shaken condition of this clever, self-reliant young fellow, so near his own age, seemed for the moment to introduce the lad to new and unknown regions of human feeling.

While these images were pursuing each other through David's mind, Barbier was poking among his foreign books, which lay, backs upwards, on the floor to one side of the counter.

‘Do you sell them—*hein*?’ he said, looking up and pointing to them with his stick.

‘Yes. Especially the scientific books. These are an order. So is that batch. Napoleon III.’s “Cæsar,” isn’t it? And those over there are “on spec.” Oh, I could do something if I knew more! There’s a man over at Oldham. One of the biggest weaving-sheds—cotton velvets—that kind of thing. He’s awfully rich, and he’s got a French library; a big one, I believe. He came in here yesterday. I think I could make something out of him; but he wants all sorts of rum things—last-century memoirs, out-of-the-way ones—everything about Montaigne—first editions—Lord knows what! I say, Barbier, I dare say he’d buy your books. What’ll you let me have them for?’

‘*Diantre!* Not for your heart’s blood, my young man. It’s like your impudence to ask. You could sell more if you knew more, you think? Well now listen to me.’

The Frenchman sat down, adjusted his spectacles, and, taking a letter from his pocket, read it with deliberation.

It was from the nephew, Xavier Dubois, in answer to his uncle’s inquiries. Nothing, the writer declared, could have been more opportune. He himself was just off to Belgium, where a friend had procured him a piece of work on a new Government building. Why should not his uncle’s friends inhabit his rooms during his absence? He must keep them on, and would find

it very convenient. that being so, that some one should pay the rent. There was his studio, which was bare, no doubt, but quite habitable, and a little *cabinet de toilette* adjoining, and shut off, containing a bed and all necessities. Why should not the sister take the bedroom, and let the brother camp somehow in the studio? He could no doubt borrow a bed from some friend before they came, and with a large screen, which was one of the 'studio properties,' a very tolerable sleeping room could be improvised, and still leave a good deal of the studio free. He understood that his uncle's friends were not looking for luxury. But *le stricte nécessaire* he could provide.

Meanwhile the Englishman and his sister would find themselves at once in the artists' circle, and might see as much or as little as they liked of artistic life. He (Dubois) could of course give them introductions. There was a sculptor, for instance, on the ground floor, a man of phenomenal genius, *joli garçon* besides, who would certainly show himself *aimable* for anybody introduced by Dubois; and on the floor above there was a landscape painter, *ancien prix de Rome*, and his wife, who would also, no doubt, make themselves agreeable, and to whom the brother and sister might go for all necessary information—Dubois would see to that. Sixty francs a month paid the *appartement*; a trifle for service if you desired it—there was, however, no compulsion—to the *concierge* would make you comfortable; and as for your food, the Quartier Montmartre

abounded in cheap restaurants, and you might live as you pleased for one franc a day or twenty. He suggested that on the whole no better opening was likely to be found by two young persons of spirit, anxious to see Paris from the inside.

‘Now then,’ said Barbier, taking off his spectacles with an authoritative click, as he shut up the letter, ‘*décide toi*. Go!—and look about you for a fortnight. Improve your French; get to know some of the Paris bookmen; take some commissions out with you—buy there to the best advantage, and come back twenty per cent. better informed than when you set out.’

He smote his hands upon his knees with energy. He had a love of management and contrivance; and the payment of Eugène’s rent for him during his absence weighed with his frugal mind.

David stood twisting his mouth in silence a moment, his head thrown back against the books.

‘Well, I don’t see why not,’ he said at last, his eyes sparkling.

‘And take notice, my friend,’ said Barbier, tapping the open letter, ‘the *ancien prix de Rome* has a wife. Where wives are young women can go. Xavier can prepare the way, and, if you play your cards well, you can get Mademoiselle Louie taken off your hands while you go about.’

David nodded. He was sitting astride on the counter, his face shining with the excitement he was now too much of a man to show with the old freedom.

Suddenly there was a sound of wild voices from the inside room.

‘Miss Grieve! Miss Grieve! don’t you take that child away. Bring it back, I say; I’ll go to your brother, I will!’

‘That’s Mrs. Mason’s nurse,’ said David, springing off the counter. ‘What’s up now?’

He threw open the door into the kitchen, just as Louie swept into the room from the other side.* She had a white bundle in her arms, and her face was flushed with a sly triumph. After her ran the stout woman who was looking after Mrs. Mason, purple with indignation.

‘Now look yo here, Mr. Grieve,’ she cried at sight of David, ‘I can’t stand it, and I won’t. Am I in charge of Mrs. Mason or am I not? Here ’s Miss Grieve, as soon as my back ’s turned, as soon as I’ve laid that blessed baby in its cot as quiet as a lamb—and it’s been howling since three o’clock this morning, as *yo* know—in she whips, claws it out of its cradle, and is off wi’ it, Lord knows where. Thank the Lord, Mrs. Mason’s asleep! If she weren’t, she’d have a fit. She’s feart to death o’ Miss Grieve. We noather on us know what to make on her. She’s like a wild thing scometimes—not a human creetur at aw—Gie me that chilt, I tell tha!’

Louie vouchsafed no answer. She sat down composedly before the fire, and, cradling the still sleeping child on her knee, she bent over it examining its waxen

hands and tiny feet with an eager curiosity. The nurse, who stood over her trembling with anger, and only deterred from snatching the child away by the fear of wakening it, might have been talking to the wall.

‘Now, look here, Louie, what d’ you do that for?’ said David, remonstrating; ‘why can’t you leave the child alone? You’ll be putting Mrs. Mason in a taking, and that ’ll do her harm.’

‘Nowt o’ t’ sort,’ said Louie composedly, ‘it ’s that woman there ’ll wake her with screeching. She’s asleep, and the baby’s asleep, and I’m taking care of it. Why can’t Mrs. Bury go and look after Mrs. Mason? She hasn’t swept her room this two days, and it ’s a sight to see.’

Pricked in a tender point, Mrs. Bury broke out again into a stream of protest and invective, only modified by her fear of waking her patient upstairs, and interrupted by appeals to David. But whenever she came near to take the baby Louie put her hands over it, and her wide black eyes shot out intimidating flames before which the aggressor invariably fell back.

Attracted by the fight, Barbier had come up to look, and now stood by the shop-door, riveted by Louie’s strange beauty. She wore the same black and scarlet dress in which she had made her first appearance in Manchester. She now never wore it out of doors, her quick eye having at once convinced her that it was not in the fashion. But the instinct which had originally led her to contrive it was abundantly justified whenever

she still condescended to put it on, so startling a relief it lent to the curves of her slim figure, developed during the last two years of growth to all womanly roundness and softness, and to the dazzling colour of her dark head and thin face. As she sat by the fire, the white bundle on her knee, one pointed foot swinging in front of her, now hanging over the baby, and now turning her bright dangerous look and compressed lips on Mrs. Bury, she made a peculiar witch-like impression on Barbier which thrilled his old nerves agreeably. It was clear, he thought, that the girl wanted a husband and a family of her own. Otherwise why should she run off with other people's children? But he would be a bold man who ventured on her!

David, at last seeing that Louie was in the mood to tear the babe asunder rather than give it up, with difficulty induced Mrs. Bury to leave her in possession for half an hour, promising that, as soon as the mother woke, the child should be given back.

• 'If I've had enough of it,' Louie put in, as a saving clause, luckily just too late to be heard by the nurse, who had sulkily closed the door behind her, declaring that 'sich an owdacious chit she never saw in her born days, and niver heerd on one oather.'

David and Barbier went back into the shop to talk, leaving Louie to her nursing. As soon as she was alone she laid back the flannel which lay round the child's head, and examined every inch of its downy poll and puckered face, her warm breath making the

tiny lips twitch in sleep as it travelled across them. Then she lifted the little nightgown and looked at the pink feet nestling in their flannel wrapping. A glow sprang into her cheek; her great eyes devoured the sleeping creature. Its weakness and helplessness, its plasticity to anything she might choose to do with it, seemed to intoxicate her. She looked round her furtively, then bent and laid a hot covetous kiss on the small clenched hand. The child moved; had it been a little older it would have wakened; but Louie, hastily covering it up, began to rock it and sing to it.

The door into the shop was ajar. As David and Barbier were hanging together over a map of Paris which David had hunted out of his stores, Barbier suddenly threw up his head with a queer look.

‘What’s that she’s singing?’ he said quickly.

He got up hastily, overturning his stool as he did so, and went to the door to listen.

‘I haven’t heard that,’ he said, with some agitation, ‘since my father’s sister used to sing it me when I was a small lad, up at Augoumat in the mountains near Puy!’

Sur le pont d’Arignon
Tout le monde y danse en rond;
Les beaux messieurs font comme ça,
Les beaux messieurs font comme ça.

The words were but just distinguishable as Louie sang. They were clipped and mutilated as by one who no longer understood what they meant. But the

intonation was extraordinarily French, French of the South, and Barbier could hardly stand still under it.

‘Where did you learn that?’ he called to her from the door.

The girl stopped and looked at him with her bright bird-like glance. But she made no reply.

‘Did your mother teach it you?’ he asked, coming in.

‘I suppose so,’ she said indifferently.

‘Can you talk any French—do you remember it?’

‘No.’

‘But you’d soon learn. You haven’t got the English mouth, that’s plain. Do you know your brother thinks of taking you to Paris?’

She started.

‘He don’t,’ she said laconically.

‘Oh, don’t he. Just ask him then?’

Ten minutes later Louie had been put in possession of the situation. As David had fully expected, she took no notice whatever of his suggestion that after all she might not care to come. They might be rough quarters, he said, and queer people about; and it would cost a terrible deal more for two than one. Should he not ask Dora Lomax to take her in for a fortnight? John, of course, would look after the shop. He spoke under the pressure of a sudden qualm, knowing it would be no use; but his voice had almost a note of entreaty in it.

‘When do you want to be starting?’ she asked him sharply. ‘I’ll not go to Dora’s—so you needn’t

talk o' that. You can take the money out of what you'll be owing me next month.'

Her nostrils dilated as the quick breath passed through them. Barbier was fascinated by the extraordinary animation of the face, and could not take his eyes off her.

'Not for a fortnight,' said David reluctantly, answering her question. 'Barbier's letter says about the tenth of May. There's two country sales I must go to, and some other things to settle.'

She nodded.

'Well, then, I can get some things ready,' she said half to herself, staring across the baby into the fire.

When David and Barbier were gone together 'up street,' still talking over their plans, Louie leapt to her feet and laid the baby down—carelessly, as though she no longer cared anything at all about it—in the old-fashioned armchair wherein David spent so many midnight vigils. Then locking her hands behind her, she paced up and down the narrow room with the springing gait, the impetuous feverish grace, of some prisoned animal. Paris! Her education was small, and her ignorance enormous. But in the columns of a 'lady's paper' she had often bought from the station bookstall at Clough End she had devoured nothing more eagerly than the Paris letter, with its luscious descriptions of 'Paris fashions,' whereby even Lancashire women, even Clough End mill-hands in their Sunday best, were darkly

governed from afar. All sorts of bygone dreams recurred to her—rich and subtle combinations of silks, satins, laces, furs, imaginary glories clothing an imaginary Louie Grieve. The remembrance of them filled her with a greed past description, and she forthwith conceived Paris as a place all shops, each of them superior to the best in St. Ann's Square—where one might gloat before the windows all day.

She made a spring to the door, and ran upstairs to her own room. There she began to pull out her dresses and scatter them about the floor, looking at them with a critical discontented eye.

Time passed. She was standing absorbed before an old gown, planning out its renovation, when a howl arose from downstairs. She fled like a roe deer, and pounced upon the baby just in time to checkmate Mrs. Bury, who was at her heels.

Quite regardless of the nurse's exasperation with her, first for leaving the child alone, half uncovered, in a chilly room, and now for again withholding it, Louie put the little creature against her neck, rocking and crooning to it. The sudden warm contact stilled the baby; it rubbed its head into the soft hollow thus presented to it, and its hungry lips sought eagerly for their natural food. The touch of them sent a delicious thrill through Louie; she turned her head round and kissed the tiny, helpless cheek with a curious violence; then, tired of Mrs. Bury, and anxious to get back to her plans, she almost threw the child to her.

‘There—take it! I’ll soon get it again when I want to.’

And she was as good as her word. The period of convalescence was to poor Mrs. Mason—a sickly, plaintive creature at the best of times—one long struggle and misery. Louie represented to her a sort of bird of prey, who was for ever descending on her child and carrying it off to unknown lairs. For neither mother nor nurse had Louie the smallest consideration; she despised and tyrannised over them both. But her hungry fondness for the baby grew with gratification, and there was no mastering her in the matter. Warm weather came, and when she reached home after her work, she managed by one ruse or another to get hold of the child, and on one occasion she disappeared with it into the street for hours. David was amazed by the whim, but neither he nor anyone else could control it. At last, Mrs. Mason was more or less hysterical all day long, and hardly sane when Louie was within reach. As for the husband, who managed to be more at home during the days of his wife’s weakness than he had yet been since David’s tenancy began, he complained to David and spoke his mind to Louie once or twice, and then, suddenly, he ceased to pay any attention to his wife’s wails. With preternatural quickness the wife guessed the reason. A fresh terror seized her—terror of the girl’s hateful beauty. She dragged herself from her bed, found a room, while Louie was at her work, and carried off baby and husband, leaving no address.

Luckily for her, the impression of Louie's black eyes proved to have been a passing intoxication, and the poor mother breathed and lived again.

Meanwhile Louie's excitement and restlessness over the Paris plan made her more than usually trying to Dora. During this fortnight she could never be counted on for work, not even when it was a question of finishing an important commission. She was too full of her various preparations. Barbier offered her, for instance, a daily French lesson. She grasped in an instant the facilities which even the merest smattering of French would give her in Paris; every night she sat up over her phrase book, and every afternoon she cut her work short to go to Barbier. Her whole life seemed to be one flame of passionate expectation, though what exactly she expected it would have been hard to say.

Poor Dora! She had suffered many things in much patience all these weeks. Louie's clear, hard mind, her sensuous temperament, her apparent lack of all maidenly reserve, all girlish softness, made her incomprehensible to one for whom life was an iridescent web of ideal aims and obligations. The child of grace was dragged out of her own austere or delicate thoughts, and made to touch, taste, and handle what the 'world,' as the Christian understands it, might be like. Like every other daughter of the people, Dora was familiar enough with sin and weakness—Daddy alone had made her amply acquainted with both at one portion or another of his career. But just this particular temper of Louie's, with its apparent lack both

of passion and of moral sense, was totally new to her, and produced at times a stifling impression upon her, without her being able to explain to herself with any clearness what was the matter.

Yet, in truth, it often seemed as if the lawless creature had been in some sort touched by Dora, as in daily contact with a being so gentle and so magnanimous had won even upon her. That confidence, for instance, which Louie had promised John, at Dora's expense, had never been made. When it came to the point, some touch of remorse, of shame, had sealed the girl's mocking lips.

One little fact in particular had amazed Dora. Louie insisted, for a caprice, on going with her one night, in Easter week, to St. Damian's, and thenceforward went often. What attracted her, Dora puzzled herself to discover. When, however, Louie had been a diligent spectator, even at early services, for some weeks, Dora timidly urged that she might be confirmed, and that Father Russell would take her into his class. Louie laughed immoderately at the idea, but continued to go to St. Damian's all the same. Dora could not bear to be near her in church, but however far away she might place herself, she was more conscious than she liked to be of Louie's conspicuous figure and hat thrown out against a particular pillar which the girl affected. The sharp uplifted profile with its disdainful expression drew her eyes against their will. She was also constantly aware of the impression Louie made upon the crowd, of

the way in which she was stared at and remarked upon. Whenever she passed in or out of the church, people turned, and the girl, expecting it, and totally unabashed, flashed her proud look from side to side.

But once in her place, she was not inattentive. The dark chancel with its flowers and incense, the rich dresses and slow movements of the priests, the excitement of the processional hymns—these things caught her and held her. Her look was fixed and eager all the time. As to the clergy, Dora spoke to Father Russell's sister, and some efforts were made to get hold of the new-comer. But none of them were at all successful. The girl slipped through everybody's hands. Only in the case of one of the curates, a man with a powerful, ugly head, and a penetrating personality, did she show any wavering. Dora fancied that she put herself once or twice in his way, that something about him attracted her, and that he might have influenced her. But as soon as the Paris project rose on the horizon, Louie thought of nothing else. Father Impey and St. Damian's, like everything else, were forgotten. She never went near the church from the evening David told her his news to the day they left Manchester.

David ran in to say good-bye to Daddy and Dora on the night before they were to start. Since the Paris journey had been in the air, Daddy's friendliness for the young fellow had revived. He was not, after all, content to sit at home upon his six hundred pounds

‘like a hatching hen,’ and so far Daddy, whose interest in him had been for the time largely dashed by his sudden accession to fortune, was appeased.

When David appeared Lomax was standing on the rug, with a book under his arm.

‘Well, good-bye to you, young man, good-bye to you. And here’s a book to take with you that you may read in the train. It will stir you up a bit, give you an idea or two. Don’t you come back too soon.’

‘Father,’ remonstrated Dora, who was standing by, ‘who’s to look after his business?’

‘Be quiet, Dora! That book ’ll show him what can be made even of a beastly bookseller.’

David took it from him, looked at the title, and laughed. He knew it well. It was the ‘Life and Errors of John Dunton, Citizen of London,’ the eccentric record of a seventeenth-century dealer in books, who, like Daddy, had been a character and a vagrant.

‘Och! Don’t I know it by heart?’ said Daddy, with enthusiasm. ‘Many a time it’s sent me off tramping, when my poor Isabella thought she’d got me tied safe by the heels in the chimney corner. “*Though* love is strong as death, and every good man loves his wife as himself, *yet*—many’s the score of times I’ve said it off pat to Isabella—*yet* I cannot think of being confined in a narrower study than the whole world.” There’s a man for you! He gets

rid of one wife and saddles himself with another—sorrow a bit will he stop at home for either of them! “Finding I am for travelling, Valeria, to show the height of her love, is as willing I should see Europe as Eliza was I should see America.” Och! give me the book, you divil,’ cried Daddy, growing more and more Hibernian as his passion rose, ‘and, bedad, but I’ll drive it into you.’

And, reaching over, Daddy seized it, and turned over the pages with a trembling hand. Dora flushed, and the tears rose into her eyes. She realised perfectly that this performance was levelled at her at least as much as at David. Daddy’s mad irritability had grown of late with every week.

‘Listen to this, Davy!’ cried Daddy, putting up his hand for silence. ‘“When I have crossed the Hellespont, where poor Leander was drowned, Greece, China, and the Holy Land are the other three countries I’m bound to. And perhaps when my hand is in——”’

‘*My hand is in!*’ repeated Daddy, in an ecstasy. ‘What a jewel of a man!’

‘I may step thence to the Indies, for I am a true lover of travels, and, when I am once mounted, care not whether I meet the sun at his rising or going down, provided only I may but ramble . . . *He* is truly a scholar who is versed in the volume of the Universe, who doth not so much read of Nature as study Nature herself’

‘Well said—well said indeed!’ cried Daddy, flinging the book down with a wild gesture which startled them both. ‘Was that the man, Adrian Lomax, to spend the only hours of the only life he was ever likely to see—his first thought in the morning, and his last thought at night—in tickling the stomachs of Manchester clerks?’

His peaked chin and straggling locks fell forward on his breast. He stared sombrely at the young people before him, in an attitude which, as usual, was the attitude of an actor.

David’s natural instinct was to jeer. But a glance at Dora perplexed him. There was some tragedy he did not understand under this poor comedy.

‘Don’t speak back,’ said Dora, hurriedly, under her breath, as she passed him to get her frame. ‘It only makes him worse.’

After a few minutes’ broken chat, which Daddy’s mood made it difficult to keep up, David took his departure. Dora followed him downstairs.

‘You’re going to be away a fortnight,’ she said, timidly.

As she spoke, she moved her head backwards and forwards against the wall, as though it ached, and she could not find a restful spot.

‘Oh, we shall be back by then, never fear!’ said David, cheerfully. He was growing more and more sorry for her.

‘I should like to see foreign parts,’ she said wist-

fully. 'Is there a beautiful church, a cathedral, in Paris? Oh, there are a great many in France, I know! I've heard the people at St. Damian's speak of them. I would like to see the services. But they can't be nicer than ours.'

David smiled.

'I'm afraid I can't tell you much about them, Miss Dora; they aren't in my line. Good-bye, and keep your heart up.'

He was going, but he turned back to say quickly—

'Why don't you let him go off for a bit of a tramp? It might quiet him.'

'I would; I would,' she said eagerly; 'but I don't know what would come of it. We're dreadfully behindhand this month, and if he were to go away, people would be down on us; they'd think he wanted to get out of paying.'

He stayed talking a bit, trying to advise her, and, in the first place, trying to find out how wrong things were. But she had not yet come to the point of disclosing her father's secrets. She parried his questions, showing him all the while, by look and voice, that she was grateful to him for asking—for caring.

He went at last, and she locked the door behind him. But when that was done, she stood still in the dark, wringing her hands in a silent passion of longing—longing to be with him, outside, in the night, to hear his voice, to see his handsome looks again. Oh! the

fortnight would be long. So long as he was there, within a stone's throw, though he did not love her, and she was sad and anxious, yet Manchester held her treasure, and Manchester streets had glamour, had charm.

He walked to Piccadilly, and took a 'bus to Mortimer Street. He must say good-bye also to Mr. Ancrum, who had been low and ill of late.

'So you are off, David?' said Ancrum, rousing himself from what seemed a melancholy brooding over books that he was in truth not reading. As David shook hands with him, the small fusty room, the pale face and crippled form awoke in the lad a sense of indescribable dreariness. In a flash of recoil and desire his thought sprang to the journey of the next day—to the May seas—the foreign land.

'Well, good luck to you!' said the minister, altering his position so as to look at his visitor full, and doing it with a slowness which showed that all movement was an effort. 'Look after your sister, Davy.'

David had sat down at Ancrum's invitation. He said nothing in answer to this last remark, and Ancrum could not decipher him in the darkness visible of the ill-trimmed lamp.

'She's been on your mind, Davy, hasn't she?' he said, gently, laying his blanched hand on the young man's knee.

‘Well, perhaps she has,’ David admitted, with an odd note in his voice. ‘She’s not an easy one to manage.’

‘No. But you’ve *got* to manage her, Davy. There’s only you and she together. It’s your task. It’s set you. And you’re young, indeed, and raw, to have that beautiful self-willed creature on your hands.’

‘Beautiful? Do you think she’s that?’ David tried to laugh it off.

The minister nodded.

‘You’ll find it out in Paris even more than you have here. Paris is a bad place, they say. So’s London, for the matter of that. Davy, before you go, I’ve got one thing to say to you.’

‘Say away, sir.’

‘You know a great deal, Davy. My wits are nothing to yours. You’ll shoot ahead of all your old friends, my boy, some day. But there’s one thing you know nothing about—absolutely nothing—and you prate as if you did. Perhaps you must turn Christian before you do. I don’t know. At least, so long as you’re not a Christian you won’t know what *we* mean by it—what the Bible means by it. It’s one little word, Davy—*sin*.’

The minister spoke with a deep intensity, as though his whole being were breathed into what he said. David sat silent and embarrassed, opposition rising in him to what he thought ministerial assumption.

‘Well, I don’t know what you mean,’ he said, after a pause. ‘One needn’t be very old to find out that a good many people and things in the world are pretty bad. Only we Secularists explain it differently from you. We put a good deal of it down to education, or health, or heredity.’

‘Oh, I know—I know!’ said the minister hastily, as though shrinking from the conversation he had himself evoked. ‘I’m not fit to talk about it, Davy. I’m ill, I think! But there were those two things I wanted to say to you—your sister—and——’

His voice dropped. He shaded his eyes and looked away from David into the smouldering coals.

‘No—no,’ he resumed almost in a whisper; ‘it’s the *will*—it’s the *will*. It’s not anything he says, and Christ—*Christ*’s the only help.’

Again there was a silence. David studied his old teacher attentively, as far as the half-light availed him. The young man was simply angry with a religion which could torment a soul and body like this. Ancrum had been ‘down’ in this way for a long time now. Was another of his black fits approaching? If so, religion was largely responsible for them!

When at last David sighted his own door, he perceived a figure lounging on the steps.

‘I say,’ he said to himself with a groan, ‘it’s John!’

‘What on earth do you want, John, at this time of night?’ he demanded. But he knew perfectly.

‘Look here!’ said the other thickly, ‘it’s all straight. You’re coming back in a fortnight, and you’ll bring her back too!’

David laughed impatiently.

‘Do you think I shall lose her in Paris or drop her in the Channel?’

‘I don’t know,’ said Dalby, with a curiously heavy and indistinct utterance. ‘She’s very bad to me. She won’t ever marry me: I know that. But when I think I might never see her again I’m fit to go and hang myself.’

David began to kick the pebbles in the road.

‘You know what I think about it all,’ he said at last, gloomily. ‘I’ve told you before now. She couldn’t care for you if she tried. It isn’t a ha’p’orth of good. I don’t believe she’ll ever care for anybody. Anyway, she’ll marry nobody who can’t give her money and fine clothes. There! You may put that in your pipe and smoke it, for it’s as true as you stand there.’

John turned round restlessly, laid his hands against the wall, and his head upon them.

‘Well, it don’t matter,’ he said slowly, after a pause. ‘I’ll be here early. Good night!’

David stood and looked after him in mingled disgust and pity.

‘I must pack him off,’ he said, ‘I must.’

Then he threw back his young shoulders and drew in the warm spring air with a long breath. Away with care and trouble! Things would come right—must come right. This weather was summer, and in forty-eight hours they would be in Paris!

BOOK III

STORM AND STRESS

PART I

CHAPTER I

THE brother and sister left Manchester about midday, and spent the night in London at a little City hotel much frequented by Nonconformist ministers, which Ancrum had recommended.

Then next day! How little those to whom all the widest opportunities of life come for the asking, can imagine such a zest, such a freshness of pleasure! David had hesitated long before the expense of the day service *viâ* Calais; they could have gone by night third class for half the money; or they could have taken returns by one of the cheaper and longer routes. But the eagerness to make the most of every hour of time and daylight prevailed; they were to go by Calais and come back by Dieppe, seeing thereby as much as possible on the two journeys in addition to the fortnight in Paris. The mere novelty of going anything but third class was full of savour; Louie's self-conscious dignity as she settled herself into her corner on leaving Charing Cross caught David's eye; he saw himself reflected and laughed.

It was a glorious day, the firstling of the summer. In the blue overhead the great clouds rose intensely

thunderously white, and journeyed seaward under a light westerly wind. The railway banks, the copses were all prinroses; every patch of water had in it the white and azure of the sky; the lambs were lying in the still scanty shadow of the elms; every garden showed its tulips and wallflowers, and the air, the sunlight, the vividness of each hue and line bore with them an intoxicating joy, especially for eyes still adjusted to the tones and lights of Manchester in winter.

The breeze carried them merrily over a dancing sea. And once on the French side they spent their first hour in crossing from one side of their carriage to the other, pointing and calling incessantly. For the first time since certain rare moments in their childhood they were happy together and at one. Mother earth unrolled for them a corner of her magic show, and they took it like children at the play, now shouting, now spell-bound.

David had George Sand's 'Mauprat' on his knee, but he read nothing the whole day. Never had he used his eyes so intently, so passionately. Nothing escaped them, neither the detail of that strange and beautiful fen from which Amiens rises—a country of peat and peat-cutters where the green plain is diapered with innumerable tiny lakes edged with black heaps of turf and daintily set with scattered trees—nor the delicate charm of the forest lands about Chantilly. So much thinner and gracefuller these woods were than English woods! French art and

skill were here already in the wild country. Each tree stood out as though it had been personally thought for ; every plantation was in regular lines ; each woody walk drove straight from point to point, following out a plan orderly and intricate as a spider's web.

By this time Louie's fervour of curiosity and attention had very much abated ; she grew tired and cross, and presently fell asleep. But, with every mile less between them and Paris, David's pulse beat faster, and his mind became more absorbed in the flying scene. He hung beside the window, thrilling with enchantment and delight, drinking in the soft air, the beauty of the evening clouds, the wonderful greens and silvers and fiery browns of the poplars. His mind was full of images—the deep lily-sprinkled lake wherein Sténio, Lélia's poet lover, plunged and died ; the grandiose landscape of Victor Hugo ; René sitting on the cliff-side, and looking farewell to the white home of his childhood ;—of lines from 'Childe Harold' and from Shelley. His mind was in a ferment of youth and poetry, and the France he saw was not the workaday France of peasant and high road and factory, but the creation of poetic intelligence, of ignorance and fancy.

Paris came in a flash. He had realised to the full the squalid and ever-widening zone of London, had frittered away his expectations almost, in the passing it ; but here the great city had hardly announced itself before they were in the midst of it, shot out into the noise, and glare, and crowd of the Nord station.

They had no luggage to wait for, and David, trembling with excitement so that he could hardly give the necessary orders, shouldered the bags, got a cab and gave the address. Outside it was still twilight, but the lamps were lit and the Boulevard into which they presently turned seemed to brother and sister a blaze of light. The young green of the trees glittered under the gas like the trees of a pantomime; the kiosks threw their lights out upon the moving crowd; shops and cafés were all shining and alive; and on either hand rose the long line of stately houses, unbroken by any London or Manchester squalors and inequalities, towering as it seemed into the skies, and making for the great spectacle of life beneath them a setting more gay, splendid, and complete than any Englishman in his own borders can ever see.

Louie had turned white with pleasure and excitement. All her dreams of gaiety and magnificence, of which the elements had been gathered from the illustrated papers and the Manchester theatres, were more than realised by these Paris gas-lights, these vast houses, these laughing and strolling crowds.

‘Look at those people having their coffee out of doors,’ she cried to David, ‘and that white and gold place behind. Goodness! what they must spend in gas! And just look at those two girls—look, quick—there, with the young man in the black moustache—they *are* loud, but aren’t their dresses just sweet?’

She craned her neck out of window, exclaiming

—now at this, now at that—till suddenly they passed out of the Boulevard into the comparative darkness of side ways. Here the height of the houses produced a somewhat different impression; Louie looked out none the less keenly, but her chatter ceased.

At last the cab drew up with a clatter at the side of a particularly dark and narrow street, ascending somewhat sharply to the north-west from the point where they stopped.

‘Now for the *concierge*,’ said David, looking round him, after he had paid the man.

And conning Barbier’s directions in his mind, he turned into the gateway, and made boldly for a curtained door behind which shone a light.

The woman, who came out in answer to his knock, looked him all over from head to foot, while he explained himself in his best French.

‘*Tiens*,’ she said, indifferently, to a man behind her, ‘it’s the people for No. 26—*des Anglais*—*M. Paul te l’a dit*. Hand me the key.’

The *bonhomme* addressed—a little, stooping, wizened creature, with china-blue eyes, showing widely in his withered face under the light of the paraffin lamp his wife was holding—reached a key from a board on the wall and gave it to her.

The woman again surveyed them both, the young man and the girl, and seemed to debate with herself whether she should take the trouble to be civil. Finally she said in an ungracious voice—

‘It’s the fourth floor to the right. I must take you up, I suppose.’

David thanked her, and she preceded them with the light through a door opposite and up some stone stairs.

When they had mounted two flights, she turned abruptly on the landing—

‘You take the *appartement* from M. Dubois?’

‘Yes,’ said David, enchanted to find that, thanks to old Barbier’s constant lessons, he could both understand and reply with tolerable ease; ‘for a fortnight.’

‘Take care; the landlord will be descending on you; M. Dubois never pays; he may be turned out any day, and his things sold. Where is Mademoiselle going to sleep?’

‘But in M. Dubois’ *appartement*,’ said David, hoping this time, in his dismay, that he did *not* understand; ‘he promised to arrange everything.’

‘He has arranged nothing. Do you wish that I should provide some things? You can hire some furniture from me. And do you want service?’

The woman had a grasping eye. David’s frugal instincts took alarm.

‘*Merci*, Madame! My sister and I do not require much. We shall wait upon ourselves. If Madame will tell us the name of some restaurant near——’

Instead, Madame made an angry sound and thrust the key abruptly into Louie’s hand, David being laden with the bags.

‘There are two more flights,’ she said roughly;

‘then turn to the left, and go up the staircase straight in front of you—first door to the right. You’ve got eyes; you’ll find the way.’

‘*Mais, Madame—*’ cried David, bewildered by these directions, and trying to detain her.

But she was already halfway down the flight below them, throwing back remarks which, to judge from their tone, were not complimentary.

There was no help for it. Louie was dropping with fatigue, and beginning to be much out of temper. David with difficulty assumed a hopeful air, and up they went again. Leading off the next landing but one they found a narrow passage, and at the end of it a ladder-like staircase. At the top of this they came upon a corridor at right angles, in which the first door bore the welcome figures ‘26.’

‘All right,’ said David; ‘here we are. Now we’ll just go in, and look about us. Then if you’ll sit and rest a bit, I’ll run down and see where we can get something to eat.’

‘Be quick, then—do,’ said Louie. ‘I’m just fit to drop.’

With a beating heart he put the key into the lock of the door. It fitted, but he could not turn it. Both he and Louie tried in vain.

‘What a nuisance!’ said he at last. ‘I must go and fetch up that woman again. You sit down and wait.’

As he spoke there was a sound below of quick steps, and of a voice, a woman’s voice, humming a song.

‘Some one coming,’ he said to Louie; ‘perhaps they understand the lock.’

They ran down to the landing below to reconnoitre. There was, of course, gas on the staircase, and as they hung over the iron railing they saw mounting towards them a young girl. She wore a light fawn-coloured dress and a hat covered with Parma violets. Hearing voices above her, she threw her head back, and stopped a moment. Louie’s eye was caught by her hand and its tiny wrist as it lay on the balustrade, and by the coils and twists of her fair hair. David saw no details, only what seemed to him a miracle of grace and colour, born in an instant, out of the dark—or out of his own excited fancy?

She came slowly up the steps, looking at them, at the tall dark youth and the girl beside him. Then on the top step she paused, instead of going past them. David took off his hat, but all the practical questions he had meant to ask deserted him. His French seemed to have flown.

‘You are strangers, aren’t you?’ she said, in a clear, high, somewhat imperious voice. ‘What number do you want?’

Her expression had a certain *hauteur*, as of one defending her native ground against intruders. Under the stimulus of it David found his tongue.

‘We have taken M. Paul Dubois’ rooms,’ he said. ‘We have found his door, but the key the *concierge* gave us does not fit it.’

She laughed, a free, frank laugh, which had a certain wild note in it.

‘These doors have to be coaxed,’ she said; ‘they don’t like foreigners. Give it me. This is my way, too.’

Stepping past them, she preceded them up the narrow stairs, and was just about to try the key in the lock, when a sudden recollection seemed to flash upon her.

‘I know!’ she said, turning upon them. ‘*Tenez—que je suis bête!* You are Dubois’ English friends. He told me something, and I had forgotten all about it. You are going to take his rooms?’

‘For a week or two,’ said David, irritated a little by the laughing malice, the sarcastic wonder of her eyes, ‘while he is doing some work in Brussels. It seemed a convenient arrangement, but if we are not comfortable we shall go elsewhere. If you can open the door for us we shall be greatly obliged to you, Mademoiselle. But if not I must go down for the *concierge*. We have been travelling all day, and my sister is tired.’

‘Where did you learn such good French?’ she said carelessly, at the same time leaning her weight against the door, and manipulating the key in such a way that the lock turned, and the door flew open.

Behind it appeared a large dark space. The light from the gas-jet in the passage struck into it, but beyond a chair and a tall screen-like object in the middle of the floor, it seemed to David to be empty.

‘That’s his *atelier*, of course,’ said the unknown; ‘and mine is next to it, at the other end. I suppose he has a cupboard to sleep in somewhere. Most of us have. But I don’t know anything about Dubois. I don’t like him. He is not one of my friends.’

She spoke in a dry, masculine voice, which contrasted in the sharpest way with her youth, her dress, her dainty smallness. Then, all of a sudden, as her eyes travelled over the English pair standing bewildered on the threshold of Dubois’ most uninviting apartment, she began to laugh again. Evidently the situation seemed to her extremely odd.

‘Did you ask the people downstairs to get anything ready for you?’ she inquired.

‘No,’ said David, hesitating; ‘we thought we could manage for ourselves.’

‘Well—perhaps—after the first,’ she said, still laughing. ‘But—I may as well warn you—the Merichat will be very uncivil to you if you don’t manage to pay her for something. Hadn’t you better explore? That thing in the middle is Dubois’ easel, of course.’

David groped his way in, took some matches from his pocket, found a gas-bracket with some difficulty, and lit up. Then he and Louie looked round them. They saw a gaunt high room, lit on one side by a huge studio-window, over which various tattered blinds were drawn; a floor of bare boards, with a few rags of carpet here and there; in the middle, a table covered

with painter's apparatus of different kinds ; palettes, paints, rags, tin-pots, and, thrown down amongst them, some stale crusts of bread ; a large easel, with a number of old and dirty canvases piled upon it ; two chairs, one of them without the usual complement of legs ; a few etchings and oil-sketches and fragments of coloured stuffs pinned against the wall in wild confusion ; and, spread out casually behind the easel, an iron folding-bedstead, without either mattress or bed-clothes. In the middle of the floor stood a smeared kettle on a spirit-stove, and a few odds and ends of glass and china were on the mantelpiece, together with a paraffin-lamp. Every article in the room was thick in dust.

When she had, more or less, ascertained these attractive details, Louie stood still in the middle of M. Dubois' apartment.

'What did he tell all those lies for ?' she said to David fiercely. For in the very last communication received from him, Dubois had described himself as having made all necessary preparations '*et pour la toilette et pour le manger.*' He had also asked for the rent in advance, which David with some demur had paid.

'Here's something,' cried David ; and, turning a handle in the wall, he pulled a flimsy door open and disclosed what seemed a cupboard. The cupboard, however, contained a bed, some bedding, blankets, and washing arrangements ; and David joyously announced

his discoveries. Louie took no notice of him. She was tired, angry, disgusted. The illusion of Paris was, for the moment, all gone. She sat herself down on one of the two chairs, and, taking off her hat, she threw it from her on to the belittered table with a passionate gesture.

The French girl had so far stood just outside, leaning against the doorway, and looking on with unabashed amusement while they made their inspection. Now, however, as Louie uncovered, the spectator at the door made a little, quick sound, and then ran forward.

‘*Mais, mon Dieu!* how handsome you are!’ she said with a whimsical eagerness, stopping short in front of Louie, and driving her little hands deep into the pockets of her jacket. ‘What a head!—what eyes! Why didn’t I see before? You must sit to me—you *must!* You will, won’t you? I will pay you anything you like! You sha’n’t be dull—somebody shall come and amuse you. *Voyons—monsieur!*’ she called imperiously.

David came up. She stood with one hand on the table leaning her light weight backward, looking at them with all her eyes—the very embodiment of masterful caprice.

‘Both of them!’ she said under her breath, ‘*superbe!* Monsieur, look here. You and mademoiselle are tired. There is nothing in these rooms. Dubois is a scamp without a sou. He does no work, and he gambles on

the Bourse. Everything he had he has sold by degrees. If he has gone to Brussels now to work honestly, it is for the first time in his life. He lives on the hope of getting money out of an uncle in England—that I know, for he boasts of it to everybody. It is just like him to play a practical joke on strangers. No doubt you have paid him already—*n'est-ce pas?* I thought as much. Well, never mind! My rooms are next door. I am Elise Delaunay. I work in Taranne's *atelier*. I am an artist, pure and simple, and I live to please myself and nobody else. But I have a chair or two, and the woman downstairs looks after me because I make it worth her while. Come with me. I will give you some supper, and I will lend you a rug and a pillow for that bed. Then to-morrow you can decide what to do.'

David protested, stammering and smiling. But he had flushed a rosy red, and there was no real resistance in him. He explained the invitation to Louie, who had been looking helplessly from one to the other, and she at once accepted it. She understood perfectly that the French girl admired her; her face relaxed its frown; she nodded to the stranger with a sort of proud yielding, and then let herself be taken by the arm and led once more along the corridor.

Elise Delaunay unlocked her own door.

'*Bien!*' she said, putting her head in first, 'Merichat has earned her money. Now go in—go in!—and see if I don't give you some supper.'

CHAPTER II

SHE pushed them in, and shut the door behind them. They looked round them in amazement. Here was an *atelier* precisely corresponding in size and outlook to Dubois'. But to their tired eyes the change was one from squalor to fairyland. The room was not in fact luxurious at all. But there was a Persian rug or two on the polished floor; there was a wood fire burning on the hearth, and close to it there was a low sofa or divan covered with pieces of old stuffs, and flanked by a table whereon stood a little meal, a roll, some cut ham, part of a flat fruit tart from the *pâtissier* next door, a coffee pot, and a spirit kettle ready for lighting. There were two easels in the room; one was laden with sketches and photographs; the other carried a half-finished picture of a mosque interior in Oran—a rich splash of colour, making a centre for all the rest. Everywhere indeed, on the walls, on the floor, or standing on the chairs, were studies of Algeria, done with an ostentatiously bold and rapid hand. On the mantelpiece was a small reproduction in terra cotta of one of Dalou's early statues, a peasant woman in

a long cloak straining her homely baby to her breast—true and passionate. Books lay about, and in a corner was a piano, open, with a confusion of tattered music upon it. And everywhere, as it seemed to Louie, were *shoes*!—the daintiest and most fantastic shoes imaginable—Turkish shoes, Pompadour shoes, old shoes and new shoes, shoes with heels and shoes without, shoes lined with fur, and shoes blown together, as one might think, out of cardboard and ribbons. The English girl's eyes fastened upon them at once.

'Ah, you tink my shoes pretty,' said the hostess, speaking a few words of English, '*c'est mon dada, voyez-vous—ma collection!*—*Tenez*—I cannot say dat in English, Monsieur; explain to your sister. My shoes are my passion, next to my foot. I am not pretty, but my foot is ravishing. Dalou modelled it for his Siren. That turned my head. Sit down, Mademoiselle—we will find some plates.'

She pushed Louie into a corner of the divan, and then she went over to a cupboard standing against the wall, and beckoned to David.

'Take the plates—and this potted meat. Now for the *petit vin* my doctor cousin brought me last week from the family estate. I have stowed it away somewhere. Ah! here it is. We are from the Gironde—at least my mother was. My father was nobody—*bourgeois* from tip to toe, though he called himself an artist. It was a *mésalliance* for her when she married him. Oh, he led her a life!—she died when I was small, and last year *he*

died, eleven months ago. I did my best to cry. *Impossible!* He had made Maman and me cry too much. And now I am perfectly alone in the world, and perfectly well-behaved. Monsieur Prudhomme may talk—I snap my finger at him. You will have your ideas, of course. No matter! If you eat my salt, you will hardly be able to speak ill of me.'

'Mademoiselle!' cried David, inwardly cursing his shyness—a shyness new to him—and his complete apparent lack of anything to say, or the means of saying it.

'Oh, don't protest!—after that journey you can't afford to waste your breath. Move a little, Monsieur—let me open the other door of the cupboard—there are some chocolates worth eating on that back shelf. Do you admire my *armoire*? It is old Breton—it belonged to my grandmother, who was from Morbihan. She brought her linen in it. It is cherry wood, you see, mounted in silver. You may search Paris for another like it. Look at that flower work on the panels. It is not *banal* at all—it has character—there is real design in it. Now take the chocolates, and these sardines—put them down over there. As for me, I make the coffee.'

She ran over to the spirit lamp, and set it going; she measured out the coffee; then sitting down on the floor, she took the bellows and blew up the logs.

'Tell me your name, Monsieur?' she said suddenly, looking round.

David gave it in full, his own name and Louie's.

Then he walked up to her, making an effort to be at his ease, and said something about their French descent. His mode of speaking was slow and bookish—correct, but wanting in life. After this year's devotion to French books, after all his compositions with Barbier, he had supposed himself so familiar with French! With the woman from the *loge*, indeed, he could have talked at large, had she been conversational instead of rude. But here, with this little glancing creature, he felt himself plunged in a perfect quagmire of ignorance and stupidity. When he spoke of being half French, she became suddenly grave, and studied him with an intent piercing look. 'No,' she said slowly, 'no, at bottom you are not French a bit, you are all English, I feel it. I should fight you—*à outrance*! *Grive*—what a strange name! It's a bird's name. You are not like it—you do not belong to it. But *David*!—ah, that is better. *Voyons*!'

She sprang up, ran over to the furthest easel, and, routing about amongst its disorder of prints and photographs, she hit upon one, which she held up triumphantly.

'There, Monsieur!—there is your prototype. That is David—the young David—scourge of the Philistine. You are bigger and broader. I would rather fight him than you—but it is like you, all the same. Take it.'

And she held out to him a photograph of the Donatello David at Florence—the divine young hero

in his shepherd's hat, fresh from the slaying of the oppressor.

He looked at it, red and wondering, then shook his head.

‘What is it? Who made it, Mademoiselle?’

‘Donatello—oh, I never saw it. I was never in Italy, but a friend gave it me. It is like you, I tell you. But, what use is that? You are English—yes, you *are*, in spite of your mother. It is very well to be called David—you may be Goliath all the time!’

Her tone had grown hard and dry—insulting almost. Her look sent him a challenge.

He stared at her dumbfounded. All the self-confidence with which he had hitherto governed his own world had deserted him. He was like a tongue-tied child in her hands.

She enjoyed her mastery, and his discomfiture. Her look changed and melted in an instant.

‘I am rude,’ she said, ‘and you can’t answer me back—not yet—for a day or two. *Pardon!* Monsieur David—Mademoiselle—will you come to supper?’

She put chairs and waved them to their places with the joyous animation of a child, waiting on them, fetching this and that, with the quickest, most graceful motions. She had brought from the *armoire* some fine white napkins, and now she produced a glass or two and made her guests provide themselves with the red wine which neither had ever tasted before, and over which Louie made an involuntary face. Then she began to

chatter and to eat—both as fast as possible—now laughing at her own English or at David's French, and now laying down her knife and fork that she might look at Louie, with an intent professional look which contrasted oddly with the wild freedom of her talk and movements.

Suddenly she took up a wineglass and held it out to David with a piteous childish gesture.

‘Fill it, Monsieur, and then drink—drink to my good luck. I wish for something—with my *life*—my *soul*; but there are people who hate me, who would delight to see me crushed. And it will be three weeks—three long long weeks, almost—before I know.’

She was very pale, the tears had sprung to her eyes, and the hand holding the glass trembled. David flushed and frowned in the vain desire to understand her.

‘What am I to do?’ he said, taking the glass mechanically, but making no use of it.

‘Drink!—drink to my success. I have two pictures, Monsieur, in the Salon; you know what that means? the same as your *Académie*? *Parfaitement*! ah! you understand. One is well hung, on the line; the other has been shamefully treated—but *shamefully*! And all the world knows why. I have some enemies on the jury, and they delight in a mean triumph over me—a triumph which is a scandal. But I have friends, too—good friends—and in three weeks the rewards will be voted. You understand? the medals, and the *mentions*

honorables. As for a medal—no! I am only two years in the *atelier*; I am not unreasonable. But a *mention*!—ah! Monsieur David, if they don't give it me I shall be very miserable.'

Her voice had gone through a whole gamut of emotion in this speech—pride, elation, hope, anger, offended dignity—sinking finally to the plaintive note of a child asking for consolation.

And luckily David had followed her. His French novels had brought him across the Salon and the jury system; and Barbier had told him tales. His courage rose. He poured the wine into the glass with a quick, uncertain hand, and raised it to his lips.

'*A la gloire de Mademoiselle!*' he cried, tossing it down with a gesture almost as free and vivid as her own.

Her eye followed him with excitement, taking in every detail of the action—the masculine breadth of chest, the beauty of the dark head and short upper lip.

'Very good—very good!' she said, clapping her small hands. 'You did that admirably—you improve—*n'est-ce pas, Mademoiselle?*'

But Louie only stared blankly and somewhat haughtily in return. She was beginning to be tired of her silent *rôle*, and of the sort of subordination it implied. The French girl seemed to divine it, and her.

'She does not like me,' she said, with a kind of

wonder under her breath, so that David did not catch the words. 'The other is quite different.'

Then, springing up, she searched in the pockets of her jacket for something—lips pursed, brows knitted, as though the quest were important.

'Where are my cigarettes?' she demanded sharply. 'Ah! here they are. Mademoiselle—Monsieur.'

Louie laughed rudely, pushing them back without a word. Then she got up, and began boldly to look about her. The shoes attracted her, and some Algerian scarves and burnouses that were lying on a distant chair. She went to turn them over.

Mademoiselle Delaunay looked after her for a moment—with the same critical attention as before—then with a shrug she threw herself into a corner of the divan, drawing about her a bit of old embroidered stuff which lay there. It was so flung, however, as to leave one dainty foot in an embroidered silk stocking visible beyond it. The tone of the stocking was repeated in the bunch of violets at her neck, and the purples of the flowers told with charming effect against her white skin and the pale fawn colour of her dress and hair. David watched her with intoxication. She could hardly be taller than most children of fourteen, but her proportions were so small and delicate that her height, whatever it was, seemed to him the perfect height for a woman. She handled her cigarette with mannish airs; unless it were some old harridan in a collier's cottage, he had never seen a woman smoke

before, and certainly he had never guessed it could become her so well. Not pretty! He was in no mood to dissect the pale irregular face with its subtleties of line and expression; but, as she sat there smoking and chatting, she was to him the realisation—the climax of his dream of Paris. All the lightness and grace of that dream, the strangeness, the thrill of it seemed to have passed into her.

‘Will you stay in those rooms?’ she inquired, slowly blowing away the curls of smoke in front of her.

David replied that he could not yet decide. He looked as he felt—in a difficulty.

‘Oh! *you* will do well enough there. But your sister—*Tenez!* There is a family on the floor below—an artist and his wife. I have known them take *pensionnaires*. They are not the most distinguished persons in the world—*mais enfin!*—it is not for long. Your sister might do worse than board with them.’

David thanked her eagerly. He would make all inquiries. He had in his pocket a note of introduction from Dubois to Madame Cervin, and another, he believed, to the gentleman on the ground floor—to M. Montjoie, the sculptor.

‘Ah! M. Montjoie!’

Her brows went up, her grey eyes flashed. As for her tone it was half amused, half contemptuous. She began to speak, moved restlessly, then apparently thought better of it.

‘After all,’ she said, in a rapid undertone, ‘*qu’est-*

ce que cela me fait ? Allons. Why did you come here at all, instead of to an hotel, for so short a time ?'

He explained as well as he was able.

'You wanted to see something of French life, and French artists or writers ?' she repeated slowly, 'and you come with introductions from Xavier Dubois ! *C'est drôle, ça.* Have you studied art ?'

He laughed.

'No—except in books.'

'What books ?'

'Novels—George Sand's.'

It was her turn to laugh now.

'You are really too amusing ! No, Monsieur, no ; you interest me. I have the best will in the world towards you ; but I cannot ask Consuelos and Teverinos to meet you. *Pas possible.* I regret——'

She fell into silence a moment, studying him with a merry look. Then she broke out again.

'Are you a connoisseur in pictures, Monsieur ?'

He had reddened already under her *persiflage*. At this he grew redder still.

'I have never seen any, Mademoiselle,' he said, almost piteously ; 'except once a little exhibition in Manchester.'

'Nor sculpture ?'

'No,' he said honestly ; 'nor sculpture.'

It seemed to him he was being held under a microscope, so keen and pitiless were her laughing eyes. But she left him no time to resent it.

‘So you are a blank page, Monsieur—virgin soil—and you confess it. You interest me extremely. I should even like to teach you a little. I am the most ignorant person in the world. I know nothing about artists in books. *Mais je suis artiste, moi ! fille d’artiste.* I could tell you tales——’

She threw her graceful head back against the cushion behind her, and smiled again broadly, as though her sense of humour were irresistibly tickled by the situation.

Then a whim seized her, and she sat up, grave and eager.

‘I have drawn since I was eight years old,’ she said; ‘would you like to hear about it? It is not romantic—not the least in the world—but it is true.’

And with what seemed to his foreign ear a marvellous swiftness and fertility of phrase, she poured out her story. After her mother died she had been sent at eight years old to board at a farm near Rouen by her father, who seemed to have regarded his daughter now as plaything and model, now as an intolerable drag on the freedom of a vicious career. And at the farm the child’s gift declared itself. She began with copying the illustrations, the saints and holy families in a breviary belonging to one of the farm servants; she went on to draw the lambs, the carts, the horses, the farm buildings, on any piece of white wood she could find littered about the yard, or any bit of paper saved from a parcel, till at last the old curé

took pity upon her and gave her some chalks and a drawing-book. At fourteen her father, for a caprice, reclaimed her, and she found herself alone with him in Paris. To judge from the hints she threw out, her life during the next few years had been of the roughest and wildest, protected only by her indomitable resolve to learn, to make herself an artist, come what would. 'I meant to be *famous*, and I mean it still!' she said, with a passionate emphasis which made David open his eyes. Her father refused to believe in her gift, and was far too self-indulgent and brutal to teach her. But some of his artist friends were kind to her, and taught her intermittently; by the help of some of them she got permission, although under age, to copy in the Louvre, and with hardly any technical knowledge worked there feverishly from morning to night; and at last Taranne—the great Taranne, from whose *atelier* so many considerable artists had gone out to the conquest of the public—Taranne had seen some of her drawings, heard her story, and generously taken her as a pupil.

Then emulation took hold of her—the fierce desire to be first in all the competitions of the *atelier*. David had the greatest difficulty in following her rapid speech, with its slang, its technical idioms, its extravagance and variety; but he made out that she had been for a long time deficient in sound training, and that her rivals at the *atelier* had again and again beaten her easily in spite of her gift, because of her weakness in the grammar of her art.

‘ And whenever they beat me I could have killed my conquerors ; and whenever I beat them, I despised my judges and wanted to give the prize away. It is not my fault. *Je suis faite comme ça—voilà !* I am as vain as a peacock ; yet when people admire anything I do, I think them fools—*fools !* I am jealous and proud and absurd—so they all say ; yet a word, a look from a real artist—from one of the great men who *know*—can break me, make me cry. *Démélez ça, Monsieur, si vous pouvez !* ’

She stopped, out of breath. Their eyes were on each other. The fascination, the absorption expressed in the Englishman’s look startled her. She hurriedly turned away, took up her cigarette again, and nestled into the cushion. He vainly tried to clothe some of the quick comments running through his mind in adequate French, could find nothing but the most commonplace phrases, stammered out a few, and then blushed afresh. In her pity for him she took up her story again.

After her father’s sudden death, the shelter, such as it was, of his name and companionship was withdrawn. What was she to do ? It turned out that she possessed a small *rente* which had belonged to her mother, and which her father had never been able to squander. Two relations from her mother’s country near Bordeaux turned up to claim her, a country doctor and his sister—middle-aged, devout—to her wild eyes at least, altogether forbidding.

· They made too much of their self-sacrifice in

taking me to live with them,' she said with her little ringing laugh. 'I said to them—"My good uncle and aunt, it is too much—no one could have the right to lay such a burden upon you. Go home and forget me. I am incorrigible. I am an artist. I mean to live by myself, and work for myself. I am sure to go to the bad—good morning." They went home and told the rest of my mother's people that I was insane. But they could not keep my money from me. It is just enough for me. Besides, I shall be selling soon.—certainly I shall be selling! I have had two or three inquiries already about one of the exhibits in the Salon. Now then—*talk*, Monsieur David!' and she emphasised the words by a little frown; 'it is your turn.'

And gradually by skill and patience she made him talk, made him give her back some of her confidences. It seemed to amuse her greatly that he should be a bookseller. She knew no booksellers in Paris; she could assure him they were all pure *bourgeois*, and there was not one of them that could be likened to Donatello's David. Manchester she had scarcely heard of; she shook her fair head over it. But when he told her of his French reading, when he waxed eloquent about Rousseau and George Sand, then her mirth became uncontrollable.

'You came to France to talk of Rousseau and George Sand?' she asked him with dancing eyes—'*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* what do you take us for?'

This time his vanity was hurt. He asked her to

tell him what she meant—why she laughed at him.

‘I will do better than that,’ she said; ‘I will get some friend of mine to take you to-morrow to “Les Trois Rats.”’

‘What is “Les Trois Rats?”’ he asked, half wounded and half mystified.

‘“Les Trois Rats,” Monsieur, is an artist’s café. It is famous, it is characteristic; if you are in search of local colour you must certainly go there. When you come back you will have some fresh ideas, I promise you.’

He asked if ladies also went there.

‘Some do; I don’t. Conventions mean nothing to me, as you perceive, or I should have a companion here to play propriety. But like you, perhaps, I am Romantic. I believe in the grand style. I have ideas as to how men should treat me. I can read Octave Feuillet. I have a terrible weakness for those *cavaliers* of his. And garbage makes me ill. So I avoid the “Trois Rats.”’

She fell silent, resting her little chin on her hand. Then with a sudden sly smile she bent forward and looked him in the eyes.

‘Are you pious, Monsieur, like all the English? There is some religion left in your country, isn’t there?’

‘Yes, certainly,’ he admitted, ‘there was a good deal.’

Then, hesitating, he described his own early reading

of Voltaire, watching its effect upon her, afraid lest here too he should say something fatuous, behind the time, as he seemed to have been doing all through.

‘Voltaire!’—she shrugged her little shoulders—‘Voltaire to me is just an old *perruque*—a prating philanthropical person who talked about *le bon Dieu*, and wrote just what every *bourgeois* can understand. If he had had his will and swept away the clergy and the Church, how many fine subjects we artists should have lost!’

He sat helplessly staring at her. She enjoyed his perplexity a minute: then she returned to the charge.

‘Well, my credo is very short. Its first article is art—and its second is art—and its third is art!’

Her words excited her. The delicate colour flushed into her cheek. She flung her head back and looked straight before her with half-shut eyes.

‘Yes—I believe in art—and expression—and colour—and *le vrai*. Velazquez is my God, and—and he has too many prophets to mention! I was devout once for three months—since then I have never had as much faith of the Church sort as would lie on a ten-sous piece. But’—with a sudden whimsical change of voice—‘I am as credulous as a Breton fisherman, and as superstitious as a gipsy! Wait and see. Will you look at my pictures?’

She sprang up and showed her sketches. She had been a winter in Algiers, and had there and in Spain

taken a passion for the East, for its colour, its mystery, its suggestions of cruelty and passion. She chattered away, explaining, laughing, haranguing, and David followed her submissively from thing to thing, dumb with the interest and curiosity of this new world and language of the artist.

Louie meanwhile, who, after the refreshment of supper, had been forgetting both her fatigue and the other two in the entertainment provided her by the shoes and the Oriental dresses, had now found a little inlaid coffer on a distant table, full of Algerian trinkets, and was examining them. Suddenly a loud crash was heard from her neighbourhood.

Elise Delaunay stood still. Her quick speech died on her lips. She made one bound forward to Louie; then, with a cry, she turned deathly pale, tottered, and would have fallen, but that David ran to her.

‘The glass is broken,’ she said, or rather gasped; ‘she has broken it—that old Venetian glass of Maman’s. Oh! my pictures!—my pictures! How can I undo it? *Je suis perdue!* Oh go!—go!—go—both of you! Leave me alone! Why did I ever see you?’

She was beside herself with rage and terror. She laid hold of Louie, who stood in sullen awkwardness and dismay, and pushed her to the door so suddenly and so violently that the stronger, taller girl yielded without an attempt at resistance. Then holding the door open, she beckoned imperiously to David, while the tears streamed down her cheeks.

‘Adieu, Monsieur—say nothing—there is nothing to be said—go!’

He went out bewildered, and the two in their amazement walked mechanically to their own door.

‘She is mad!’ said Louie, her eyes blazing, when they paused and looked at each other. ‘She must be mad. What did she say?’

‘What happened?’ was all he could reply.

‘I threw down that old glass—it wasn’t my fault—I didn’t see it. It was standing on the floor against a chair. I moved the chair back just a trifle, and it fell. A shabby old thing—I could have paid for another easily. Well, I’m not going there again to be treated like that.’

The girl was furious. All that chafed sense of exclusion and slighted importance which had grown upon her during David’s *tête-à-tête* with their strange hostess came to violent expression in her resentment. She opened the door of their room, saying that whatever he might do she was going to bed and to sleep somewhere, if it was on the floor.

David made a melancholy light in the squalid room, and Louie went about her preparations in angry silence. When she had withdrawn into the little cupboard-room, saying carelessly that she supposed he could manage with one of the bags and his great coat, he sat down on the edge of the bare iron bedstead, and recognised with a start that he was quivering all over—with fatigue, or excitement? His chief feeling perhaps

was one of utter discomfiture, flatness, and humiliation.

He had sat there in the dark without moving for some minutes, when his ear caught a low uncertain tapping at the door. His heart leapt. He sprang up and turned the key in an instant.

There on the landing stood Elise Delaunay, her arms filled with what looked like a black bearskin rug, her small tremulous face and tear-wet eyes raised to his.

‘*Pardon, Monsieur,*’ she said hurriedly. ‘I told you I was superstitious—well, now you see. Will you take this rug?—one can sleep anywhere with it though it is so old. And has your sister what she wants? Can I do anything for her? No! *Alors*—I must talk to you about her in the morning. I have some more things in my head to say. *Pardon!—et bonsoir.*’

She pushed the rug into his hands. He was so moved that he let it drop on the floor unheeding, and as she looked at him, half audacious, half afraid, she saw a painful struggle, as of some strange new birth, pass across his dark young face. They stood so a moment, looking at each other. Then he made a quick step forward with some inarticulate words. In an instant she was halfway along the corridor, and, turning back so that her fair hair and smiling eyes caught the light she held, she said to him with the queenliest gesture of dismissal:

‘*Au revoir, Monsieur David, sleep well.*’

CHAPTER III

DAVID woke early from a restless sleep. He sprang up and dressed. Never had the May sun shone so brightly ; never had life looked more alluring.

In the first place he took care to profit by the hints of the night before. He ran down to make friends with Madame Merichat—a process which was accomplished without much difficulty, as soon as a franc or two had passed, and arrangements had been made for the passing of a few more. She was to take charge of the *appartement*, and provide them with their morning coffee and bread. And upon this her grim countenance cleared. She condescended to spend a quarter of an hour gossiping with the Englishman, and she promised to stand as a buffer between him and Dubois' irate landlord.

'A job of work at Brussels, you say, Monsieur ? *Bien* ; I will tell the *propriétaire*. He won't believe it—Monsieur Dubois tells too many lies ; but perhaps it will keep him quiet. He will think of the return—of the money in the pocket. He will bid me inform him the very moment Monsieur Dubois shows his nose, that

he may descend upon him, and so you will be let alone.'

He mounted the stairs again, and stood a moment looking along the passage with a quickening pulse. There was a sound of low singing, as of one crooning over some occupation. It must be she! Then she had recovered her trouble of the night before—her strange trouble. Yet he dimly remembered that in the farm-houses of the Peak also the breaking of a looking-glass had been held to be unlucky. And, of course, in interpreting the omen she had thought of her pictures and the jury.

How could he see her again? Suddenly it occurred to him that she had spoken of taking a holiday since the Salon opened. A holiday which for her meant 'copying in the Louvre.' And where else, pray, does the tourist naturally go on the first morning of a visit to Paris?

The young fellow went back into his room with a radiant face, and spent some minutes, as Louie had not yet appeared, in elaborating his toilette. The small cracked glass above the mantelpiece was not flattering, and David was almost for the first time anxious about and attentive to what he saw there. Yet, on the whole, he was pleased with his short serge coat and his new tie. He thought they gave him something of a student air, and would not disgrace even *her* should she deign to be seen in his company. As he laid his brush down he looked at his own

brown hand, and remembered hers with a kind of wonder—so small and white, the wrist so delicately rounded.

When Louie emerged she was not in a good temper. She declared that she had hardly slept a wink ; that the bed was not fit to sleep on ; that the cupboard was alive with mice, and smelt intolerably. David first endeavoured to appease her with the coffee and rolls which had just arrived, and then he broached the plan of sending her to board with the Cervins, which Mademoiselle Delaunay had suggested. What did she think ? It would cost more, perhaps, but he could afford it. On their way out he would deliver the two notes of introduction, and no doubt they could settle it directly if she liked.

Louie yawned, put up objections, and refused to see anything in a promising light. Paris was horrid, and the man who had let them the rooms ought to be ‘had up.’ As for people who couldn’t talk any English she hated the sight of them.

The remark from an Englishwoman in France had its humour. But David did not see that point of it. He flushed hotly, and with difficulty held an angry tongue. However, he was possessed with an inward dread—the dread of the idealist who sees his pleasure as a beautiful whole—lest they should so quarrel as to spoil the visit and the new experience. Under this curb he controlled himself, and presently, with more *savoir vivre* than he was conscious

of, proposed that they should go out and see the shops.

Louie, at the mere mention of shops, passed into another mood. After she had spent some time on dressing they sallied forth, David delivering his notes on the way down. Both noticed that the house was squalid and ill-kept, but apparently full of inhabitants. David surmised that they were for the most part struggling persons of small means and extremely various occupations. There were three *ateliers* in the building, the two on their own top floor, and M. Montjoie's, which was apparently built out at the back on the ground floor. The first floor was occupied by a dressmaker, the *propriétaire's* best tenant, according to Madame Merichat. Above her was a clerk in the Ministry of the Interior, with his wife and two or three children; above them again the Cervins, and a couple of commercial travellers. and so on.

The street outside, in its general aspect, suggested the same small, hard-pressed professional life. It was narrow and dull; it mounted abruptly towards the hill of Montmartre, with its fort and cemetery, and, but for the height of the houses, which is in itself a dignified architectural feature, would have been no more inspiring than a street in London.

A few steps, however, brought them on to the Boulevard Montmartre, and then, taking the Rue Lafitte, they emerged upon the Boulevard des Italiens.

Louie looked round her, to this side and that, paused

for a moment, bewildered as it were by the general movement and gaiety of the scene. Then a *lingerie* shop caught her eye, and she made for it. Soon the last cloud had cleared from the girl's brow. She gave herself with ecstasy to the shops, to the people. What jewellery, what dresses, what delicate cobwebs of lace and ribbon, what miracles of colour in the florists' windows, what suggestions of wealth and lavishness everywhere! Here in this world of costly contrivance, of an eager and inventive luxury, Louise Suveret's daughter felt herself at last at home. She had never set foot in it before; yet already it was familiar, and she was part of it.

Yes, she was as well dressed as anybody, she concluded, except perhaps the ladies in the closed carriages whose dress could only be guessed at. As for good looks, there did not seem to be much of *them* in Paris. She called the Frenchwomen downright plain. They knew how to put on their clothes; there was style about them, she did not deny that; but she was prepared to maintain that there was hardly a decent face among them.

Such air, and such a sky! The trees were rushing into leaf; summer dresses were to be seen everywhere; the shops had swung out their awnings, and the day promised a summer heat still tempered by a fresh spring breeze. For a time David was content to lounge along, stopping when his companion did, lost as she was in the enchantment and novelty of the scene,

drinking in Paris as it were at great gulps, saying to himself they would be at the Opera directly, then the Théâtre-Français, the Louvre, the Tuileries, the Place de la Concorde ! Every book that had ever passed through his hands containing illustrations and descriptions of Paris he had read with avidity. He, too, like Louie, though in a different way, was at home in these streets, and hardly needed a look at the map he carried to find his way. Presently, when he could escape from Louie, he would go and explore to his heart's content, see all that the tourist sees, and then penetrate further, and judge for himself as to those sweeping and iconoclastic changes which, for its own tyrant's purposes, the Empire had been making in the older city. As he thought of the Emperor and the government his gorge rose within him. Barbier's talk had insensibly determined all his ideas of the imperial régime. How much longer would France suffer the villainous gang who ruled her ? He began an inward declamation in the manner of Hugo, exciting himself as he walked—while all the time it was the spring of 1870 which was swelling and expanding in the veins and branches of the plane trees above him—May was hurrying on, and Wörth lay three short months ahead !

Then suddenly into the midst of his political musings and his traveller's ardour the mind thrust forward a disturbing image—the figure of a little fair-haired artist. He looked round impatiently. Louie's loiterings began to chafe him.

‘Come along, do,’ he called to her, waking up to the time; ‘we shall never get there.’

‘Where?’ she demanded.

‘Why, to the Louvre.’

‘What’s there to see there?’

‘It’s a great palace. The Kings of France used to live there once. Now they’ve put pictures and statues into it. You must see it, Louie—everybody does. Come along.’

‘I’ll not hurry,’ she said perversely. ‘I don’t care *that* about silly old pictures.’

And she went back to her shop-gazing. David felt for a moment precisely as he had been used to feel in the old days on the Scout, when he had tried to civilise her on the question of books. And now as then he had to wrestle with her, using the kind of arguments he felt might have a chance with her. At last she sulkily gave way, and let him lead on at a quick pace. In the Rue Saint-Honoré, indeed, she was once more almost unmanageable; but at last they were safely on the stairs of the Louvre, and David’s brow smoothed, his eye shone again. He mounted the interminable steps with such gaiety and eagerness that Louie’s attention was drawn to him.

‘Whatever do you go that pace for?’ she said crossly. ‘It’s enough to kill anybody going up this kind of thing!’

‘It isn’t as bad as the Downfall,’ said David, laughing, ‘and I’ve seen you get up that fast enough.’

Come, catch hold of my umbrella and I'll drag you up.'

Louie reached the top, out of breath, turned into the first room to the right, and looked scornfully round her.

'Well I never!' she ejaculated. 'What's the good of this?'

Meanwhile David shot on ahead, beckoning to her to follow. She, however, would take her own pace, and walked sulkily along, looking at the people who were not numerous enough to please her, and only regaining a certain degree of serenity when she perceived that here as elsewhere people turned to stare after her.

David meanwhile threw wondering glances at the great Veronese, at Raphael's archangel, at the towering Vandyke, at the 'Virgin of the Rocks.' But he passed them by quickly. Was she here? Could he find her in this wilderness of rooms? His spirits wavered between delicious expectancy and the fear of disappointment. The gallery seemed to him full of copyists young and old: beardless *rapins* laughing and chatting with fresh maidens; old men sitting crouched on high seats with vast canvases before them; or women, middle-aged and plain, with knitted shawls round their shoulders, at work upon the radiant Greuzes and Lancrets; but that pale golden head—nowhere!

At last!

He hurried forward, and there, in front of a Velazquez, he found her, in the company of two young

men, who were leaning over the back of her chair criticising the picture on her easel.

‘Ah, Monsieur David!’

She took up the brush she held with her teeth for a moment, and carelessly held him out two fingers of her right hand.

‘Monsieur—make a diversion—tell the truth—these gentlemen here have been making a fool of me.’

And throwing herself back with a little laughing, coquettish gesture, she made room for him to look.

‘Ah, but I forgot; let me present you. M. Alphonse, this is an Englishman; he is new to Paris, and he is an acquaintance of mine. You are not to play any joke upon him. M. Lenain, this gentleman wishes to be made acquainted with art; you will undertake his education—you will take him to-night to “Les Trois Rats.” I promised for you.’

She threw a merry look at the elder of her two attendants, who ceremoniously took off his hat to David and made a polite speech, in which the word *enchanté* recurred. He was a dark man, with a short black beard, and full restless eye; some ten years older apparently than the other, who was a dare-devil boy of twenty.

‘*Allons!* tell me what you think of my picture, M. David.’

The three waited for the answer, not without malice. David looked at it perplexed. It was a copy of the black and white Infanta, with the pink rosettes, which,

like everything else that France possesses from the hand of Velazquez, is to the French artist of to-day among the sacred things, the flags and battle-cries of his art. Its strangeness, its unlikeness to anything of the picture kind that his untrained provincial eyes had ever lit upon, tied his tongue. Yet he struggled with himself.

‘Mademoiselle, I cannot explain—I cannot find the words. It seems to me ugly. The child is not pretty nor the dress. But——’

He stared at the picture, fascinated—unable to express himself, and blushing under the shame of his incapacity.

The other three watched him curiously.

‘Taranne should get hold of him,’ the elder artist murmured to his companion, with an imperceptible nod towards the Englishman. ‘The models lately have been too common. There was a rebellion yesterday in the *atelier de femmes*; one and all declared the model was not worth drawing, and one and all left.’

‘Minxes!’ said the other coolly, a twinkle in his wild eye. ‘Taranne will have to put his foot down. There are one or two demons among them; one should make them know their place.’

Lenain threw back his head and laughed—a great, frank laugh, which broke up the ordinary discontent of the face agreeably. The speaker, M. Alphonse Duchatel, had been already turned out of two *ateliers* for a series of the most atrocious *charges* on record. He was now

with Taranne, on trial, the authorities keeping a vigilant eye on him.

Meanwhile Elise, still leaning back with her eyes on her picture, was talking fast to David, who hung over her, absorbed. She was explaining to him some of the Infanta's qualities, pointing to this and that with her brush, talking a bright, untranslatable artist's language which dazzled him, filled him with an exciting medley of new impressions and ideas, while all the time his quick sense responded with a delightful warmth and eagerness to the personality beside him—child, prophetess, egotist, all in one—noticing each characteristic detail, the drooping, melancholy trick of the eyes, the nervous delicacy of the small hand holding the brush.

‘David—*David!* I'm tired of this, I tell you! I'm not going to stay, so I thought I'd come and tell you. Good-bye!’

He turned abruptly, and saw Louie standing defiantly a few paces behind him.

‘What do you want, Louie?’ he said impatiently, going up to her. It was no longer the same man, the same voice.

‘I want to go. I hate this!’

‘I'm not ready, and you can't go by yourself. Do you see’—(in an undertone)—‘this is Mademoiselle Delaunay?’

‘That don't matter,’ she said sulkily, making no movement. ‘If you ain't going, I am.’

By this time, however, Elise, as well as the two

artists, had perceived Louie's advent. She got up from her seat with a slight sarcastic smile, and held out her hand.

'*Bonjour*, Mademoiselle! You forgave me for dat I did last night? I ask your pardon—oh, *de tout mon cœur!*'

Even Louie perceived that the tone was enigmatical. She gave an inward gulp of envy, however, excited by the cut of the French girl's black and white cotton. Then she dropped Elise's hand, and moved away.

'Louie!' cried David, pursuing her in despair; 'now just wait half an hour, there's a good girl, while I look at a few things, and then afterwards I'll take you to the street where all the best shops are, and you can look at them as much as you like.'

Louie stood irresolute.

'What is it?' said Elise to him in French. 'Your sister wants to go? Why, you have only just come!'

'She finds it dull looking at pictures,' said David, with an angry brow, controlling himself with difficulty. 'She must have the shops.'

Elise shrugged her shoulders and, turning her head, said a few quick words that David did not follow to the two men behind her. They all laughed. The artists, however, were both much absorbed in Louie's appearance, and could not apparently take their eyes off her.

'Ah!' said Elise, suddenly.

She had recognised some one at a distance, to whom

she nodded. Then she turned and looked at the English girl, laughed, and caught her by the wrist.

‘Monsieur David, here are Monsieur and Madame Cervin. Have you thought of sending your sister to them? If so, I will present you. Why not? They would amuse her. Madame Cervin would take her to all the shops, to the races, to the Bois. *Que sais-je?*’

All the while she was looking from one to the other. David’s face cleared. He thought he saw a way out of this *impasse*.

‘Louie, come here a moment. I want to speak to you.’

And he carried her off a few yards, while the Cervins came up and greeted the group round the Infanta. A powerfully built, thickset man, in a grey suit, who had been walking with them, fell back as they joined Elise Delaunay, and began to examine a Pieter de Hooghe with minuteness.

Meanwhile David wrestled with his sister. She had much better let Mademoiselle Delaunay arrange with these people. Then Madame Cervin could take her about wherever she wanted to go. He would make a bargain to that effect. As for him, he must and would see Paris—pictures, churches, public buildings. If the Louvre bored her, everything would bore her, and it was impossible either that he should spend his time at her apron-string, flattening his nose against the shop-windows, or that she should go about alone. He was not going to have her taken for ‘a bad lot,’ and

treated accordingly, he told her frankly, with an imperious tightening of all his young frame. He had discovered some time since that it was necessary to be plain with Louie.

She hated to be disposed of on any occasion, except by her own will and initiative, and she still made difficulties for the sake of making them, till he grew desperate. Then, when she had pushed his patience to the very last point, she gave way.

‘You tell her she’s to do as I want her,’ she said, threateningly. ‘I won’t stay if she doesn’t. And I’ll not have her paid too much.’

David led her back to the rest.

‘My sister consents. Arrange it if you can, Mademoiselle,’ he said imploringly to Elise.

A series of quick and somewhat noisy colloquies followed, watched with disapproval by the *gardien* near, who seemed to be once or twice on the point of interfering.

Mademoiselle Delaunay opened the matter to Madame Cervin, a short, stout woman, with no neck, and a keen, small eye. Money was her daily and hourly preoccupation, and she could have kissed the hem of Elise Delaunay’s dress in gratitude for these few francs thus placed in her way. It was some time now since she had lost her last boarder, and had not been able to obtain another. She took David aside, and, while her look sparkled with covetousness, explained to him volubly all that she would do for Louie,

and for how much. And she could talk some English too—certainly she could. Her education had been *excellent*, she was thankful to say.

‘*Mon Dieu, qu’elle est belle !*’ she wound up. ‘Ah, Monsieur, you do very right to entrust your sister to me. A young fellow like you—no!—that is not *con-venable*. But I—I will be a dragon. Make your mind quite easy. With me all will go well.’

Louie stood in an impatient silence while she was being thus talked over, exchanging looks from time to time with the two artists, who had retired a little behind Mademoiselle Delaunay’s easel, and from that distance were perfectly competent to let the bold-eyed English girl know what they thought of her charms.

At last the bargain was concluded, and the Cervins walked away with Louie in charge. They were to take her to a restaurant, then show her the Rue Royale and the Rue de la Paix, and, finally—David making no demur whatever about the expense—there was to be an afternoon excursion through the Bois to Longchamps, where some of the May races were being run.

As they receded, the man in grey, before the Pieter de Hooghe, looked up, smiled, dropped his eyeglass, and resumed his place beside Madame Cervin. She made a gesture of introduction, and he bowed across her to the young stranger.

For the first time Elise perceived him. A look of annoyance and disgust crossed her face.

‘Do you see,’ she said, turning to Lenain; ‘there is that animal, Montjoie? He did well to keep his distance. What do the Cervins want with him?’

The others shrugged their shoulders.

‘They say his Mænad would be magnificent if he could keep sober enough to finish her,’ said Lenain; ‘it is his last chance; he will go under altogether if he fails; he is almost done for already.’

‘And what a gift!’ said Alphonse, in a lofty tone of critical regret. ‘He should have been a second Barye. *Ah, la vie Parisienne—la maudite vie Parisienne!*’

Again Lenain exploded.

‘Come and lunch, you idiot,’ he said, taking the lad’s arm; ‘for whom are you posing?’

But before they departed, they inquired of David in the politest way what they could do for him. He was a stranger to Mdlle. Delaunay’s acquaintance; they were at his service. Should they take him somewhere at night? David, in an effusion of gratitude, suggested ‘*Les Trois Rats*.’ He desired greatly to see the artist world, he said. Alphonse grinned. An appointment was made for eight o’clock, and the two friends walked off.

CHAPTER IV

DAVID and Elise Delaunay thus found themselves left alone. She stood a moment irresolutely before her canvas, then sat down again, and took up her brushes.

‘I cannot thank you enough, Mademoiselle,’ the young fellow began shyly, while the hand which held his stick trembled a little. ‘We could never have arranged that affair for ourselves.’

She coloured and bent over her canvas.

‘I don’t know why I troubled myself,’ she said, in a curious irritable way.

‘Because you are kind!’ he cried, his charming smile breaking. ‘Because you took pity on a pair of strangers, like the guardian angel that you are!’

The effect of the foreign language on him leading him to a more set and literary form of expression than he would have naturally used, was clearly marked in the little outburst.

Elise bit her lip, frowned and fidgeted, and presently looked him straight in the face.

‘Monsieur David, warn your sister that that man with the Cervins this morning—the man in grey, the

sculptor, M. Montjoie—is a disreputable scoundrel that no decent woman should know.’

David was taken aback.

‘And Madame Cervin——’

Elise raised her shoulders.

‘I don’t offer a solution,’ she said; ‘but I have warned you.’

‘Monsieur Cervin has a somewhat strange appearance,’ said David, hesitating.

And, in fact, while the negotiations had been going on there had stood beside the talkers a shabby, slouching figure of a man, with longish grizzled hair and a sleepy eye—a strange, remote creature, who seemed to take very little notice of what was passing before him. From various indications, however, in the conversation, David had gathered that this looker-on must be the former *prix de Rome*.

Elise explained that Monsieur Cervin was the wreck of a genius. In his youth he had been the chosen pupil of Ingres and Hippolyte Flandrin, had won the *prix de Rome*, and after his three years in the Villa Medici had come home to take up what was expected to be a brilliant career. Then for some mysterious reason he had suddenly gone under, disappeared from sight, and the waves of Paris had closed over him. When he reappeared he was broken in health, and married to a retired modiste, upon whose money he was living. He painted bad pictures intermittently, but spent most of his time in hanging about his old

haunts—the Louvre, the Salon, the various exhibitions, and the dealers, where he was commonly regarded by the younger artists who were on speaking terms with him as a tragic old bore, with a head of his own worth painting, however, if he could be got to sit—for an augur or a chief priest.

‘It was *absinthe* that did it,’ said Elise calmly, taking a fresh charge into her brush, and working away at the black trimmings of the Infanta’s dress. ‘Every day, about four, he disappears into the Boulevard. Generally, Madame Cervin drives him like a sheep; but when four o’clock comes she daren’t interfere with him. If she did, he would be unmanageable altogether. So he takes his two hours or so, and when he comes back there is not much amiss with him. Sometimes he is excited, and talks quite brilliantly about the past—sometimes he is nervous and depressed, starts at a sound, and storms about the noises in the street. Then she hurries him off to bed, and next morning he is quite meek again, and tries to paint. But his hand shakes, and he can’t see. So he gives it up, and calls to her to put on her things. Then they wander about Paris, till four o’clock comes round again, and he gives her the slip—always with some elaborate pretence or other. Oh! she takes it quietly. Other vices might give her more trouble.’

The tone conveyed the affectation of a complete knowledge of the world, which saw no reason whatever to be ashamed of itself. The girl was just twenty, but

she had lived for years, first with a disreputable father, and then in a perpetual *camaraderie*, within the field of art, with men of all sorts and kinds. There are certain feminine blooms which a *milieu* like this effaces with deadly rapidity.

For the first time David was jarred. The idealist in him recoiled. His conscience, too, was roused about Louie. He had handed her over, it seemed, to the custody of a drunkard and his wife, who had immediately thrown her into the company of a man no decent woman ought to know. And Mademoiselle Delaunay had led him into it. The guardian angel speech of a few moments before rang in his ears uncomfortably.

Moreover, whatever rebellions his young imagination might harbour, whatever license in his eyes the great passions might claim, he had maintained for months and years past a practical asceticism, which had left its mark. The young man who had starved so gaily on sixpence a day that he might read and learn, had nothing but impatience and disgust for the glutton and the drunkard. It was a kind of physical repulsion. And the woman's light indulgent tone seemed for a moment to divide them.

Elise looked round. Why this silence in her companion?

In an instant she divined him. Perhaps her own conscience was not easy. Why had she meddled in the young Englishman's affairs at all? For a whim?

Out of a mere good-natured wish to rid him of his troublesome sister; or because his handsome looks, his *naïveté*, and his eager admiration of herself amused and excited her, and she did not care to be balked of them so soon? At any rate, she found refuge in an outburst of temper.

‘Ah!’ she said, after a moment’s pause and scrutiny. ‘I see! You think I might have done better for your sister than send her to lodge with a drunkard—that I need not have taken so much trouble to give you good advice for that! You repent your little remarks about guardian angels! You are disappointed in me!—you distrust me!’

She turned back to her easel and began to paint with headlong speed, the small hand flashing to and fro, the quick breath rising and falling tempestuously.

He was dismayed—afraid, and he began to make excuses both for himself and her. It would be all right; he should be close by, and if there were trouble he could take his sister away.

She let her brushes fall into her lap with an exclamation.

‘Listen!’ she said to him, her eyes blazing—why, he could not for the life of him understand. ‘There will be no trouble. What I told you means nothing open—or disgusting. Your sister will notice nothing unless you tell her. But I was candid with you—I always am. I told you last night that I had no scruples. You thought it was a woman’s exaggera-

tion ; it was the literal truth ! If a man drinks, or is vicious, so long as he doesn't hurl the furniture at my head, or behave himself offensively to me, what does it matter to me ! If he drinks so that he can't paint, and he wants to paint, well !—then he seems to me another instance of the charming way in which a kind Providence has arranged this world. I am sorry for him, *tout bonnement* ! If I could give the poor devil a hand out of the mud, I would ; if not, well, then, no sermons ! I take him as I find him ; if he annoys me, I call in the police. But as to hiding my face and canting, not at all ! That is your English way—it is the way of our *bourgeoisie*. It is not mine. I don't belong to the respectables—I would sooner kill myself a dozen times over. I can't breathe in their company. I know how to protect myself ; none of the men I meet dare to insult me ; that is my idiosyncrasy—everyone has his own. But I have my ideas, and nobody else matters a fig to me.—So now, Monsieur, if you regret our forced introduction of last night, let me wish you a good morning. It will be perfectly easy for your sister to find some excuse to leave the Cervins. I can give you the addresses of several cheap hotels where you and she will be extremely comfortable, and where neither I nor Monsieur Cervin will annoy you !'

David stared at her. He had grown very pale. She, too, was white to the lips. The violence and passion of her speech had exhausted her ; her hands trembled in her lap. A wave of emotion swept through

him. Her words were insolently bitter. Why, then, this impression of something wounded and young and struggling—at war with itself and the world, proclaiming loneliness and *Sehnsucht*, while it flung anger and reproach?

He dropped on one knee, hardly knowing what he did. Most of the students about had left their work for a while; no one was in sight but a *gardien*, whose back was turned to them, and a young man in the remote distance. He picked up a brush she had let fall, pressed it into her reluctant hand, and laid his forehead against the hand for an instant.

‘You misunderstand me,’ he said, with a broken, breathless utterance. ‘You are quite wrong—quite mistaken. There are not such thoughts in me as you think. The world matters nothing to me, either. I am alone, too; I have always been alone. You meant everything that was heavenly and kind—you must have meant it. I am a stupid idiot! But I could be your friend—if you would permit it.’

He spoke with an extraordinary timidity and slowness. He forgot all his scruples, all pride—everything. As he knelt there, so close to her delicate slimness, to the curls on her white neck, to the quivering lips and great, defiant eyes, she seemed to him once more a being of another clay from himself—beyond any criticism his audacity could form. He dared hardly touch her, and in his heart there swelled the first irrevocable wave of young passion.

She raised her hand impetuously and began to paint again. But suddenly a tear dropped on to her knee. She brushed it away, and her wild smile broke.

‘Bah!’ she said, ‘what a scene, what a pair of children! What was it all about? I vow I haven’t an idea. You are an excellent *farceur*, Monsieur David! One can see well that you have read George Sand.’

He sat down on a little three-legged stool she had brought with her, and held her box open on his knee. In a minute or two they were talking as though nothing had happened. She was giving him a fresh lecture on Velazquez, and he had resumed his rôle of pupil and listener. But their eyes avoided each other, and once when, in taking a tube from the box he held, her fingers brushed against his hand, she flushed involuntarily and moved her chair a foot further away.

‘Who is that?’ she asked, suddenly looking round the corner of her canvas. ‘*Mon Dieu!* M. Regnault! How does he come here? They told me he was at Granada.’

She sat transfixed, a joyous excitement illuminating every feature. And there, a few yards from them, examining the Rembrandt ‘Supper at Emmaus’ with a minute and absorbed attention, was the young man he had noticed in the distance a few minutes before. As Elise spoke, the new-comer apparently heard his name, and turned. He put up his eyeglass, smiled, and took off his hat.

‘Mademoiselle Delannay! I find you where I left

you, at the feet of the master! Always at work! You are indefatigable. Taranne tells me great things of you. "Ah," he says, "if the men would work like the women!" I assure you, he makes us smart for it. May I look? Good—very good! a great improvement on last year—stronger, more knowledge in it. That hand wants study—but you will soon put it right. Ah, Velazquez! That a man should be great, one can bear that, but so great! It is an offence to the rest of us mortals. But one cannot realise him out of Madrid. I often sigh for the months I spent copying in the Museo. There is a repose of soul in copying a great master—don't you find it? One rests from one's own efforts awhile—the spirit of the master descends into yours, gently, profoundly.'

He stood beside her, smiling kindly, his hat and gloves in his hands, perfectly dressed, an air of the great world about his look and bearing which differentiated him wholly from all other persons whom David had yet seen in Paris. In physique, too, he was totally unlike the ordinary Parisian type. He was a young athlete, vigorous, robust, broad-shouldered, tanned by sun and wind. Only his blue eye—so subtle, melancholy, passionate—revealed the artist and the thinker.

Elise was evidently transported by his notice of her. She talked to him eagerly of his pictures in the Salon, especially of a certain 'Salome,' which, as David presently gathered, was the sensation of the year. She

raved about the qualities of it—the words, colour, poignancy, force recurring in the quick phrases.

‘No one talks of your *success* now, Monsieur. It is another word. *C’est la gloire elle-même qui vous parle à l’oreille !*’

As she let fall the most characteristic of all French nouns, a slight tremor passed across the young man’s face. But the look which succeeded it was one of melancholy ; the blue eyes took a steely hardness.

‘Perhaps a lying spirit, Mademoiselle. And what matter, so long as everything one does disappoints oneself? What a tyrant is art!—insatiable, adorable! You know it. We serve our king on our knees, and he deals us the most miserly gifts.’

‘It is the service itself repays,’ she said, eagerly, her chest heaving.

‘True!—most true! But what a struggle always!—no rest—no content. And there is no other way. One must seek. grope, toil—then produce rapidly—in a flash—throw what you have done behind you—and so on to the next problem, and the next. There is no end to it—there never can be. But you hardly came here this morning, I imagine, Mademoiselle, to hear me prate! I wish you good day and good-bye. I came over for a look at the Salon, but to-morrow I go back to Spain. I can’t breathe now for long away from my sun and my South! Adieu, Mademoiselle. I am told your prospects, when the voting comes on, are excellent. May the gods inspire the jury!’

He bowed, smiled, and passed on, carrying his lion-head and kingly presence down the gallery, which had now filled up again, and where, so David noticed, person after person turned as he came near with the same flash of recognition and pleasure he had seen upon Elise's face. A wild jealousy of the young conqueror invaded the English lad.

'Who is he?' he asked.

Elise, womanlike, divined him in a moment. She gave him a sidelong glance and went back to her painting.

'That,' she said quietly, 'is Henri Regnault. Ah, you know nothing of our painters. I can't make you understand. For me he is a young god—there is a halo round his head. He has grasped his fame—the fame we poor creatures are all thirsting for. It began last year with the Prim—General Prim on horseback—oh, magnificent!—a passion!—an energy! This year it is the "Salome." About—Gautier—all the world—have lost their heads over it. If you go to see it at the Salon, you will have to wait your turn. Crowds go every day for nothing else. Of course there are murmurs. They say the study of Fortuny has done him harm. Nonsense! People discuss him because he is becoming a master—no one discusses the nonentities. *They* have no enemies. Then he is sculptor, musician, athlete—well-born besides—all the world is his friend. But with it all so simple—*bon camarade* even for poor scrawlers like me. *Je l'adore!*'

‘So it seems,’ said David.

The girl smiled over her painting. But after a bit she looked up with a seriousness, nay, a bitterness, in her siren’s face, which astonished him.

‘It is not amusing to take you in—you are too ignorant. What do you suppose Henri Regnault matters to me? His world is as far above mine as Velazquez’ art is above my art. But how can a foreigner understand our shades and grades? Nothing but *success*, but *la gloire*, could ever lift me into his world. Then indeed I should be everybody’s equal, and it would matter to nobody that I had been a Bohemian and a *déclassée*.’

She gave a little sigh of excitement, and threw her head back to look at her picture. David watched her.

‘I thought,’ he said ironically, ‘that a few minutes ago you were all for Bohemia. I did not suspect these social ambitions.’

‘All women have them—all artists deny them,’ she said, recklessly. ‘There, explain me as you like, Monsieur David. But don’t read my riddle too soon, or I shall bore you. Allow me to ask you a question.’

She laid down her brushes and looked at him with the utmost gravity. His heart beat—he bent forward.

‘Are you ever hungry, Monsieur David?’

He sprang up, half enraged, half ashamed.

‘Where can we get some food?’

‘That is my affair,’ she said, putting up her brushes. ‘Be humble, Monsieur, and take a lesson in Paris.’

And out they went together, he beside himself with the delight of accompanying her, and proudly carrying her box and satchel. How her little feet slipped in and out of her pretty dress—how, as they stood on the top of the great flight of stairs leading down into the court of the Louvre, the wind from outside blew back the curls from her brow, and ruffled the violets in her hat, the black lace about her tiny throat ! It was an enchantment to follow and to serve her. She led him through the Tuileries Gardens and the Place de la Concorde to the Champs-Élysées. The fountains leapt in the sun ; the river blazed between the great white buildings of its banks ; to the left was the gilded dome of the Invalides, and the mass of the Corps Législatif, while in front of them rose the long ascent to the Arc de l’Etoile set in vivid green on either hand. Everywhere was space, glitter, magnificence. The gaiety of Paris entered into the Englishman, and took possession.

Presently, as they wandered up the Champs-Élysées, they passed a great building to the left. Elise stopped and clasped her hands in front of her with a little nervous, spasmodic gesture.

‘That,’ she said, ‘is the Salon. My fate lies there. When we have had some food, I will take you in to see.’

She led him a little further up the Avenue, then took him aside through cunningly devised labyrinths of green till they came upon a little café restaurant

among the trees, where people sat under an awning, and the wind drove the spray of a little fountain hither and thither among the bushes. It was gay, foreign, romantic, unlike anything David had ever seen in his northern world. He sat down, with Barbier's stories running in his head. Mademoiselle Delaunay was George Sand—independent, gifted, on the road to fame like that great *déclassée* of old ; and he was her friend and comrade, a humble soldier, a camp follower, in the great army of letters.

Their meal was of the lightest. This descent on the Champs-Élysées had been a freak on Elise's part, who wished to do nothing so *banal* as take her companion to the Palais Royal. But the restaurant she had chosen, though of a much humbler kind than those which the rich tourist commonly associates with this part of Paris, was still a good deal more expensive than she had rashly supposed. She opened her eyes gravely at the charges ; abused herself extravagantly for a lack of *savoir vivre* ; and both with one accord declared it was too hot to eat. But upon such eggs and such green peas as they did allow themselves—a *portion* of each, scrupulously shared—David at any rate, in his traveller's ardour, was prepared to live to the end of the chapter.

Afterwards, over the coffee and the cigarettes, Elise taking her part in both, they lingered for one of those hours which make the glamour of youth. Confidences flowed fast between them. His French grew suppler

and more docile, answered more truly to the individuality behind it. He told her of his bringing up, of his wandering with the sheep on the mountains, of his reading among the heather, of 'Lias and his visions, of Hannah's cruelties and Louie's tempers—that same idyll of peasant life to which Dora had listened months before. But how differently told! Each different listener changes the tale, readjusts the tone. But here also the tale pleased. Elise, for all her leanings towards new schools in art, had the Romantic's imagination and the Romantic's relish for things foreign and unaccustomed. The English boy and his story seemed to her both charming and original. Her artist's eye followed the lines of the ruffled black head and noted the red-brown of the skin. She felt a wish to draw him—a wish which had entirely vanished in the case of Louie.

'Your sister has taken a dislike to me,' she said to him once, coolly. 'And as for me, I am afraid of her. Ah! and she broke my glass!'

She shivered, and a look of anxiety and depression invaded her small face. He guessed that she was thinking of her pictures, and began timidly to speak to her about them. When they returned to the world of art, his fluency left him; he felt crushed beneath the weight of his own ignorance and her accomplishment.

'Come and see them!' she said, springing up. 'I am tired of my Infanta. Let her be awhile. Come to the Salon, and I will show you "Salome." Or are

you sick of pictures? What do you want to see? *Ça m'est égal.* I can always go back to my work.'

She spoke with a cavalier lightness which teased and piqued him.

'I wish to go where you go,' he said flushing, 'to see what you see.'

She shook her little head.

'No compliments, Monsieur David. We are serious persons, you and I. Well, then, for a couple of hours, *soyons camarades!*'

Of those hours, which prolonged themselves indefinitely, David's after remembrance was somewhat crowded and indistinct. He could never indeed think of Regnault's picture without a shudder, so poignant was the impression it made upon him under the stimulus of Elise's nervous and passionate comments. It represented the daughter of Herodias resting after the dance, with the dish upon her knee which was to receive the head of the saint. Her mass of black hair—the first strong impression of the picture—stood out against the pale background, and framed the smiling sensual face, broadly and powerfully made, like the rest of the body, and knowing neither thought nor qualm. The colour was a bewilderment of scarlets and purples, of yellow and rose-colour, of turtle-greys and dazzling flesh-tints—bathed the whole of it in the searching light of the East. The strangeness, the science of it, its extraordinary brilliance and energy,

combined with its total lack of all emotion, all pity, took indelible hold of the English lad's untrained provincial sense. He dreamt of it for nights afterwards.

For the rest—what a whirl and confusion! He followed Elise through suffocating rooms, filled with the liveliest crowd he had ever seen. She was constantly greeted, surrounded, carried off to look at this and that. Her friends and acquaintances, indeed, whether men or women, seemed all to treat her in much the same way. There was complete, and often noisy, freedom of address and discussion between them. She called all the men by their surnames, and she was on half mocking, half caressing terms with the women, who seemed to David to be generally art students, of all ages and aspects. But nobody took any liberties with her. She had her place, and that one of some predominance. Clearly she had already the privileges of an eccentric, and a certain cool ascendancy of temperament. Her little figure fluttered hither and thither, gathering a train, then shaking it off again. Sometimes she and her friends, finding the heat intolerable, and wanting space for talk, would overflow into the great central hall, with its cool palms and statues; and there David would listen to torrents of French artistic theory, anecdote, and *blague*, till his head whirled, and French cleverness—conveyed to him in what, to the foreigner, is the most exquisite and the most tantalising of all tongues—seemed to him superhuman.

As to what he saw, after ‘Salome,’ he remembered

vividly only three pictures—Elise Delaunay's two—a portrait and a workshop interior—before which he stood, lost in naïve wonder at her talent; and the head of a woman, with a thin pale face, reddish-brown hair, and a look of pantherish grace and force, which he was told was the portrait of an actress at the Odéon who was making the world stare—Mademoiselle Bernhardt. For the rest he had the vague, distracting impression of a new world—of nude horrors and barbarities of all sorts—of things licentious or cruel, which yet, apparently, were all of as much value in the artist's eye, and to be discussed with as much calm or eagerness, as their neighbours. One moment he loathed what he saw, and threw himself upon his companion, with the half-coherent protests of an English idealism, of which she scarcely understood a word; the next he lost himself in some landscape which had torn the very heart out of an exquisite mood of nature, or in some scene of peasant life—so true and living that the scents of the fields and the cries of the animals were once more about him, and he lived his childhood over again.

Perhaps the main idea which the experience left with him was one of a goading and intoxicating *freedom*. His country lay in the background of his mind as the symbol of all dull convention and respectability. He was in the land of intelligence, where nothing is prejudged, and all experiments are open.

When they came out, it was to get an ice in the

shade, and then to wander to and fro, watching the passers-by—the young men playing a strange game with disks under the trees—the nurses and children—the ladies in the carriages—and talking, with a quick, perpetual advance towards intimacy, towards emotion. More and more there grew upon her the charm of a certain rich poetic intelligence there was in him, stirring beneath his rawness and ignorance, struggling through the fetters of language; and in response, as the evening wore on, she threw off her professional airs, and sank the egotist out of sight. She became simpler, more childish; her variable, fanciful youth answered to the magnetism of his.

At last he said to her, as they stood by the Arc de l'Etoile, looking down towards Paris:

‘The sun is just going down—this day has been the happiest of my life!’

The low intensity of the tone startled her. Then she had a movement of caprice, of superstition.

‘*Alors—assez!* Monsieur David, stay where you are. Not another step!—*Adieu!*’

Astonished and dismayed, he turned involuntarily. But, in the crowd of people passing through the Arch, she had slipped from him, and he had lost her beyond recovery. Moreover, her tone was peremptory—he dared not pursue and anger her.

Minutes passed while he stood, spell- and trance-bound, in the shadow of the Arch. Then, with the long and labouring breath, the sudden fatigue of one who

has leapt in a day from one plane of life to another—in whom a passionate and continuous heat of feeling has for the time burnt up the nervous power—he moved on eastwards, down the Champs-Élysées. The sunset was behind him, and the trees threw long shadows across his path. Shade and sun spaces alike seemed to him full of happy crowds. The beautiful city laughed and murmured round him. Nature and man alike bore witness with his own rash heart that all is divinely well with the world—let the cynics and the mourners say what they will. His hour had come, and without a hesitation or a dread he rushed upon it. Passion and youth—ignorance and desire—have never met in madder or more reckless dreams than those which filled the mind of David Grieve as he wandered blindly home.

CHAPTER V

As David climbed the garret stairs to his room, the thought of Louie flashed across his mind for the first time since the morning. He opened the door and looked round. Yes ; all her things were gone. She had taken up her abode with the Cervins.

A certain anxiety and discomfort seized him ; before going out to the Boulevard to snatch some food in preparation for his evening at the 'Trois Rats' he descended to the landing below and rang the Cervins' bell.

A charwoman, dirty and tired with much cleaning, opened to him.

No, Madame was not at home. No one was at home, and the dinner was spoiling. Had they not been seen all day ? Certainly. They had come in about six o'clock *avec une jeune personne* and M. Montjoie. She thought it probable that they were all at that moment down below, in the studio of M. Montjoie.

David already knew his way thither, and was soon standing outside the high black door with the pane of glass above it to which Madame Merichat had origi-

nally directed him. While he waited for an answer to his ring he looked about him. He was in a sort of yard which was almost entirely filled up by the sculptor's studio, a long structure lighted at one end as it seemed from the roof, and at the other by the usual north window. At the end of the yard rose a huge many-storied building which seemed to be a factory of some sort. David's Lancashire eye distinguished machinery through the monotonous windows, and the figures of the operatives ; it took note also of the fact that the rooms were lit up and work still going on at seven o'clock. All around were the ugly backs of tall houses, every window flung open to this May heat. The scene was squalid and *triste* save for the greenish blue of the evening sky, and the flight of a few pigeons round the roof of the factory.

A man in a blouse came at last, and led the way in when David asked for Madame Cervin. They passed through the inner studio full of a confusion of clay models and casts to which the dust of months gave the look and relief of bronze.

Then the further door opened, and he saw beyond a larger and emptier room ; sculptor's work of different kinds, and in various stages on either side ; casts, and charcoal studies on the walls, and some dozen people scattered in groups over the floor, all looking towards an object on which the fading light from the upper part of the large window at the end was concentrated.

What was that figure on its pedestal, that white image which lived and breathed ? *Louie ?*

The brother stood amazed beside the door, staring while the man in the blouse retreated, and the persons in the room were too much occupied with the spectacle before them to notice the new-comer's arrival.

Louie stood upon a low pedestal, which apparently revolved with the model, for as David entered, Montjoie, the man in the grey suit, with the square, massive head, who had joined the party in the Louvre, ran forward and moved it round slightly. She was in Greek dress, and some yards away from her was the clay study—a mænad with vine wreath, tambourine, thyrsus, and floating hair—for which she was posing.

Even David was dazzled by the image thus thrown out before him. With her own dress Louie Grieve seemed to have laid aside for the moment whatever common or provincial elements there might be in her strange and startling beauty. Clothed in the clinging folds of the Greek chiton; neck, arms, and feet bare; the rounded forms of the limbs showing under the soft stuff; the face almost in profile, leaning to the shoulder, as though the delicate ear were listening for the steps of the wine god; a wreath of vine leaves round the black hair which fell in curly masses about her, sharpening and framing the rosy whiteness of the cheek and neck; one hand lightly turned back behind her, showing the palm, the other holding a torch; one foot poised on tiptoe, and the whole body lightly bent forward, as though for instant motion:—in this dress and this attitude, worn and sustained with extra-

ordinary intelligence and audacity, the wild hybrid creature had risen, as it were, for the first time, to the full capacity of her endowment—had eclipsed and yet revealed herself.

The brother stood speechless, looking from the half-completed study to his sister. How had they made her understand?—where had she got the dress? And such a dress! To the young fellow, who in his peasant and tradesman experience had never even seen a woman in the ordinary low dress of society, it seemed incredible, outrageous. And to put it on for the purpose of posing as a model in a room full of strange men—Madame Cervin was the only woman present—his cheek burnt for his sister; and for the moment indignation and bewilderment held him paralysed.

In front of him a little way, but totally unaware of the stranger's entrance, were two men whispering and laughing together. One held a piece of paper on a book, and was making a hurried sketch of Louie. Every now and then he drew the attention of his companion to some of the points of the model. David caught a careless phrase or two, and understood just enough of their student's slang to suspect a good deal worse than was actually said.

Meanwhile Montjoie was standing against an iron pillar, studying intently every detail of Louie's pose, both hands arched over his eyes.

'*Peste!* did one ever see so many points combined?' he threw back to a couple of men behind him. 'Too

thin—the arms might be better—and the hands a *little* common. But for the *ensemble—mon Dieu!* we should make Carpeaux's *atelier* look alive—hein?

‘Take care!’ laughed a man who was leaning against a cast a few feet away, and smoking vigorously. ‘She likes it, she has never done it before, but she likes it. Suppose Carpeaux gets hold of her. You may repent showing her, if you want to keep her to yourself.’

‘Ah, that right knee wants throwing forward a trifle,’ said Montjoie in a preoccupied tone, and going up to Louie, he spoke a few words of bad English.

‘Allow me, mademoiselle—put your hand on me—*ainsi*—vile I change dis pretty foot.’

Louie looked down bewildered, then at the other men about her, with her great eyes, half exultant, half inquiring. She understood hardly anything of their French. One of them laughed, and, running to the clay Mænad, stooped down and touched the knee and ankle, to show her what was meant. Louie instinctively put her hand on Montjoie's shoulder to steady herself, and he proceeded to move the bare sandalled foot.

One of the men near him made a remark which David caught. He suddenly strode forward.

‘Sir! Have the goodness to tell me how you wish my sister to stand, and I will explain to her. She is not your model!’

The sculptor looked up startled. Everybody stared at the intruder, at the dark English boy, standing with

a threatening eye, and trembling with anger, beside his sister. Then Madame Cervin, clasping her little fat hands with an exclamation of dismay, rushed up to the group, while Louie leapt down from her pedestal and went to David.

‘What are you interfering for?’ she said, pushing Madame Cervin aside and looking him full in the eyes, her own blazing, her chest heaving.

‘You are disgracing yourself,’ he said to her with the same intensity, fast and low, under his breath, so as to be heard only by her. ‘How can you expose yourself as a model to these men whom you never saw before? Let them find their own models; they are a pack of brutes!’

But even as he spoke he shrank before the concentrated wrath of her face.

‘I will make you pay for it!’ she said. ‘I will teach you to domineer.’

Then she turned to Madame Cervin.

‘Come and take it off, please!’ she said imperiously. ‘It’s no good while he is here.’

As she crossed the room with her free wild step, her white draperies floating, Montjoie, who had been standing pulling at his moustaches, and studying the brother from under his heavy brows, joined her, and, stooping, said two or three smiling words in her ear. She looked up, tossed her head and laughed—a laugh half reckless, half *farouche*; two or three of the other men hurried after them, and presently they made a knot in the

further room, Louie calmly waiting for Madame Cervin, and sitting on the pedestal of a bronze group, her beautiful head and white shoulders thrown out against the metal. Montjoie's artist friends—of the kind which haunt a man whose *mœurs* are gradually bringing his talent to ruin—stood round her, smoking and talking and staring at the English girl between whiles. The arrogance with which she bore their notice excited them, but they could not talk to her, for she did not understand them. Only Montjoie had a few words of English. Occasionally Louie bent forward and looked disdainfully through the door. When would David be done prating?

For he, in fact, was grappling with Madame Cervin, who was showing great adroitness. This was what had happened according to her. Monsieur Montjoie—a man of astonishing talent, an artist altogether superior—was in trouble about his statue—could not find a model to suit him—was in despair. It seemed that he had heard of mademoiselle's beauty from England, in some way, before she arrived. Then in the studio he had shown her the Greek dress.

‘—There were some words between them—some compliments, Monsieur, I suppose—and your sister said she would pose for him. I opposed myself. I knew well that mademoiselle was a young person *tout-à-fait comme il faut*, that monsieur her brother might object to her making herself a model for M. Montjoie. ‘*Mais, mon Dieu!*’ and the ex-modiste shrugged her

round shoulders—‘mademoiselle has a will of her own.’

Then she hinted that in an hour’s acquaintance mademoiselle had already shown herself extremely difficult to manage—monsieur would probably understand that. As for her, she had done everything possible. She had taken mademoiselle upstairs and dressed her with her own hands—she had been her maid and companion throughout. She could do no more. Mademoiselle would go her own way.

‘Who were all these men?’ David inquired, still hot and frowning.

Madame Cervin rose on tiptoe and poured a series of voluble biographies into his ear. According to her everybody present was a person of distinction; was at any rate an artist, and a man of talent. But let monsieur decide. If he was dissatisfied, let him take his sister away. She had been distressed, insulted, by his behaviour. Mademoiselle’s box had been not yet unpacked. Let him say the word and it should be taken upstairs again.

And she drew away from him, bridling, striking an attitude of outraged dignity beside her husband, who had stood behind her in a slouching abstracted silence during the whole scene—so far as her dwarf stature and vulgar little moon-face permitted.

‘We are strangers here, Madame,’ cried David. ‘I asked you to take care of my sister, and I find her like this, before a crowd of men neither she nor I have ever seen before!’

Madame Cervin swept her hand grandiloquently round.

‘Monsieur has his remedy! Let him take his sister.’

He stood silent in a helpless and obvious perplexity. What, saddle himself afresh after these intoxicating hours of liberty and happiness? Fetter and embarrass every moment? Shut himself out from freedom—from *her*?

Besides, already his first instinctive rage was disappearing. In the confusion of this new world he could no longer tell whether he was right or ridiculous. Had he been playing the Philistine, mistaking a mere artistic convention for an outrage? And Louie was so likely to submit to his admonitions!

Madame Cervin watched him with a triumphant eye. When he began to stammer out what was in effect an apology, she improved the opportunity, threw off her suave manners, and let him understand with a certain plain brutality that she had taken Louie’s measure. She would do her best to keep the girl in order—it was lucky for him that he had fallen upon anybody so entirely respectable as herself and her husband—but she would use her own judgment; and if monsieur made scenes, she would just turn out her boarder, and leave him to manage as he could.

She had the whip-hand, and she knew it. He tried to appease her, then discovered that he must go, and went with a hanging head.

Louie took no notice of him nor he of her, as he passed through the inner studio, but Montjoie came forward to meet the English lad, bending his great head and shoulders with a half-ironic politeness. Monsieur Grieve he feared had mistaken the homage rendered by himself and his friends to his sister's beauty for an act of disrespect—let him be reassured! Such beauty was its own defence. No doubt monsieur did not understand artistic usage. He, Montjoie, made allowance for the fact, otherwise the young man's behaviour towards himself and his friends would have required explanation.

The two stood together at the door—David proudly crimson, seeking in vain for phrases that would not come—Montjoie cool and malicious, his battered weather-beaten face traversed by little smiles. Louie was looking on with scornful amusement, and the group of artists round her could hardly control their mirth.

He shut the door behind him with the feeling of one who has cut a ridiculous figure and beaten a mean retreat. Then, as he neared the bottom of the stairs, he gave himself a great shake, with the gesture of one violently throwing off a weight. Let those who thought that he ought to control Louie, and could control her, come and see for themselves! He had done what he thought was for the best—his quick inner sense carefully refrained from attaching any blame whatever to Mademoiselle Delaunay—and now Louie must go her

own gait, and he would go his. He had said his say—and she should not spoil this hoarded, this long-looked-for pleasure. As he passed into the street, on his way to the Boulevard for some food, his walk and bearing had in them a stern and passionate energy.

He had to hurry back for his appointment with Mademoiselle Delaunay's friends of the morning. As he turned into the Rue Chantal he passed a flower-stall aglow with roses from the south and sweet with narcissus and mignonette. An idea struck him, and he stopped, a happy smile softening away the still lingering tension of the face. For a few sous he bought a bunch of yellow-eyed narcissus and stepped gaily home with them. He had hardly time to put them in water and to notice that Madame Merichat had made Dubois' squalid abode look much more habitable than before, when there was a knock at the door and his two guides stood outside.

They carried him off at once. David found more of a tongue than he had been master of in the morning, and the three talked incessantly as they wound in and out of the streets which cover the face of the hill of Montmartre, ascending gradually towards the place they were in search of. David had heard something of the history of the two from Elise Delaunay. Alphonse was a lad of nineteen brimming over with wild fun and mischief, and perpetually in disgrace with all possible authorities; the possessor nevertheless of a certain

delicate and subtle fancy which came out in the impressionist landscapes—many of them touched with a wild melancholy as inexplicable probably to himself as to other people—which he painted in all his spare moments. The tall black-bearded Lenain was older, had been for years in Taranne's *atelier*, was an excellent draughtsman, and was now just beginning seriously upon the painting of large pictures for exhibition. In his thin long face there was a pinched and anxious look, as though in the artist's inmost mind there lay hidden the presentiment of failure.

They talked freely enough of Elise Delaunay, David alternately wincing and craving for more. What a clever little devil it was! She was burning herself away with ambition and work; Taranne flattered her a good deal; it was absolutely necessary, otherwise she would be for killing herself two or three times a week. Oh! she might get her *mention* at the Salon. The young Solons sitting in judgment on her thought on the whole she deserved it; two of her exhibits were not bad; but there was another girl in the *atelier*, Mademoiselle Bréal, who had more interest in high places. However, Taranne would do what he could; he had always made a favourite of the little Elise; and only he could manage her when she was in one of her impracticable fits.

Then Alphonse put the Englishman through a catechism, and at the end of it they both advised him not to trouble his head about George Sand. That was all dead

and done with, and Balzac not much less. He might be great, Balzac, but who could be at the trouble of reading him nowadays? Lenain, who was literary, named to him with enthusiasm Flaubert's '*Madame Bovary*' and the brothers Goncourt. As for Alphonse, who was capable, however, of occasional excursions into poetry, and could quote Musset and Hugo, the *feuilletons* in the '*Gaulois*' or the '*Figaro*' seemed, on the whole, to provide him with as much fiction as he desired. He was emphatically of opinion that the artist wants no books; a little poetry, perhaps, did no harm; but literature in painting was the very devil. Then perceiving that between them they had puzzled their man, Alphonse would have proceeded to 'cram' him in the most approved style, but that Lenain interposed, and a certain cooling of the Englishman's bright eye made success look unpromising. Finally the wild fellow clapped David on the back and assured him that '*Les Trois Rats*' would astonish him. 'Ah! here we are.'

As he spoke they turned a corner, and a blaze of light burst upon them, coming from what seemed to be a gap in the street face, a house whereof the two lower stories were wall- and windowless, though not in the manner of the ordinary café, seeing that the open parts were raised somewhat above the pavement.

'The patron saint!' said Alphonse, stopping with a grin and pointing. Following the finger with his eye David caught a fantastic sign swinging above him: a thin iron crescent, and sitting up between its two tips a

lean black rat, its sharp nose in the air, its tail curled round its iron perch, while two other creatures of the same kind crept about him, the one clinging to the lower tip of the crescent, the other peering down from the top on the king-rat in the middle. Below the sign, and heavily framed by the dark overhanging eave, the room within was clearly visible from the street. From the background of its black oak walls and furniture emerged figures, lights, pictures, above all an imposing *cheminée* advancing far into the floor, a high, fantastic structure also of black oak like the panelling of the room, but overrun with chains of black rats, carved and combined with a wild *diablerie*, and lit by numerous lights in branching ironwork. The dim grotesque shapes of the pictures, the gesticulating, shouting crowd in front of them, the mediævalism of the room and of that strange sign dangling outside: these things took the English lad's excited fancy and he pressed his way in behind his companions. He forgot what they had been telling him; his pulse beat to the old romantic tune; poets, artists, talkers—here he was to find them.

David's two companions exchanged greetings on all sides, laughing and shouting like the rest. With difficulty they found a table in a remote corner, and, sitting down, ordered coffee.

‘Alphonse! *mon cher!*’

A young man sitting at the next table turned round upon them, slapped Alphonse on the shoulder, and stared hard at David. He had fine black eyes in a

bronzed face, a silky black beard, and long hair *à la lion*, that is to say, thrown to one side of the head in a loose mane-like mass.

‘I have just come from the Salon. Not bad—Regnault? *Hein?*’

‘*Non—il arrivera, celui-là,*’ said the other calmly.

‘As for the other things from the Villa Medici fellows,’ said the first speaker, throwing his arm round the back of his chair, and twisting it round so as to front them, ‘they make me sick. I should hardly do my fire the injustice of lighting it with some of them.’

‘All the same,’ replied Alphonse stoutly, ‘that Campagna scene of D.’s is well done.’

‘Literature, *mon cher!* literature!’ cried the unknown, ‘and what the deuce do we want with literature in painting?’

He brought his fist down violently on the table.

‘*Connu,*’ said Alphonse scornfully. ‘Don’t excite yourself. But the story in D.’s picture doesn’t matter a halfpenny. Who cares what the figures are doing? It’s the brushwork and the values I look to. How did he get all that relief—that brilliance? No sunshine—no local colour—and the thing glows like a Rembrandt!’

The boy’s mad blue eyes took a curious light, as though some inner enthusiasm had stirred.

‘*Peuh!* we all know you, Alphonse. Say what you like, you want something else in a picture than painting. That’ll damn you, and make your fortune

some day, I warn you. Now *I* have got a picture on the easel that will make the *bourgeois* skip.'

And the speaker passed a large tremulous hand through his waves of hair, his lip also quivering with the nervousness of a man overworked and overdone.

'You'll not send it to the Salon, I imagine,' said another man beside him, dryly. He was fair, small and clean-shaven, wore spectacles, and had the look of a clerk or man of business.

'Yes, I shall!' cried the other violently—his name was Dumesnil—'I'll fling it at their heads. That's all our school can do—make a scandal.'

'Well, that has even been known to make money,' said the other, fingering his watch-chain with a disagreeable little smile.

'Money!' shouted Dumesnil, and swinging round to his own table again he poured out hot denunciations of the money-grabbing reptiles of to-day who shelter themselves behind the sacred name of art. Meanwhile the man at whom it was all levelled sipped his coffee quietly and took no notice.

'Ah, a song!' cried Alphonse. 'Lenain, *vois-tu*? It's that little devil Perinot. He's been painting churches down near Toulouse, his own country. Saints by the dozen, like this,' and Alphonse drooped his eyes and crossed his limp hands, taking off the frescoed mediæval saint for an instant, as only the Parisian *gamin* can do such things. 'You should see

him with a *curé*. However, the *curés* don't follow him here, more's the pity. Ah! *très bien—très bien!*'

These plaudits were called out by some passages on the guitar with which the singer was prefacing his song. His chair had been mounted on to a table, so that all the world could see and hear. A hush of delighted attention penetrated the room; and outside, in the street, David could see dark forms gathering on the pavement.

The singer was a young man, undersized and slightly deformed, with close-cut hair, and a large face, droll, pliant and ugly as a gutta-percha mask. Before he opened his lips the audience laughed.

David listened with all his ears, feeling through every fibre the piquant strangeness of the scene—alive with the foreigner's curiosity, and with youth's pleasure in mere novelty. And what clever fellows, what dash, what *camaraderie*! That old imaginative drawing towards France and the French was becoming something eagerly personal, combative almost,—and in the background of his mind throughout was the vibrating memory of the day just past—the passionate sense of a new life.

The song was tumultuously successful. The whole crowded *salle*, while it was going on, was one sea of upturned faces, and it was accompanied at intervals by thunders of applause, given out by means of sticks, spoons, fists, or anything else that might come handy. It recounted the adventures of an artist and his model.

As it proceeded, a slow crimson rose into the English lad's cheek, overspread his forehead and neck. He sat staring at the singer, or looking round at the absorbed attention and delight of his companions. By the end of it David, his face propped on his hands, was trying nervously to decipher the names and devices cut in the wood of the table on which he leant. His whole being was in a surge of physical loathing—the revulsion of feeling was bewildering and complete. So this was what Frenchmen thought of women, what they could say of them, when the mask was off, and they were at their ease. The witty brutality, the naked coarseness of the thing scourged the boy's shrinking sense. Freedom, passion—yes! but *this*! In his wild recoil he stood again under the Arc de Triomphe watching her figure disappear. Ah! pardon! That he should be listening at all seemed to a conscience, an imagination quickened by first love, to be an outrage to women, to love, to her!

Yet—how amusing it was! how irresistible, as the first shock subsided, was the impression of sparkling verse, of an astonishing mimetic gift in the singer! Towards the end he had just made up his mind to go on the first pretext, when he found himself, to his own disgust, shaking with laughter.

He recovered himself after a while, resolved to stay it out, and betrayed nothing. The comments made by his two companions on the song—consisting mainly of illustrative anecdote—were worthy of the

occasion. David sat, however, without flinching, his black eyes hardening, laughing at intervals.

Presently the room rose *en bloc*, and there was a move towards the staircase.

‘The manager, M. Edmond, has come,’ explained Alphonse; ‘they are going upstairs to the concert-room. They will have a recitation perhaps,—*ombres chinoises*,—music. Come and look at the drawings before we go.’

And he took his charge round the walls, which were papered with drawings and sketches, laughing and explaining. The drawings were done, in the main, according to him, by the artists on the staffs of two illustrated papers which had their headquarters at the ‘Trois Rats.’ David was especially seized by the innumerable sheets of animal sketches—series in which some episode of animal life was carried through from its beginning to a close, sometimes humorous, but more often tragic. In a certain number of them there was a free imagination, an irony, a pity, which linked them together, marked them as the conceptions of one brain. Alphonse pointed to them as the work of a clever fellow, lately dead, who had been launched and supported by the ‘Trois Rats’ and its frequenters. One series in particular, representing a robin overcome by the seduction of a glass of absinthe and passing through all the stages of delirium tremens, had a grim inventiveness, a fecundity of half humorous, half pathetic fancy, which held David’s eye riveted.

As for the ballet-girl, she was everywhere, with her sisters, the model and the *grisette*. And the artistic ability shown in the treatment of her had nowhere been hampered by any Philistine scruple in behalf of decency.

Upstairs there was the same mixed experience. David found himself in a corner with his two acquaintances, and four or five others, a couple of journalists, a musician and a sculptor. The conversation ranged from art to religion, from religion to style, from style to women, and all with a perpetual recurrence either to the pictures and successes of the Salon, or to the *livisons* of well-known artists.

‘Why do none of us fellows in the press pluck up courage and tell H. what we really think about those Homeric *machines* of his which he turns out year after year?’ said a journalist, who was smoking beside him, an older man than the rest of them. ‘I have a hundred things I want to say—but H. is popular—I like him himself—and I haven’t the nerve. But what the devil do we want with the Greeks—they painted their world—let us paint ours! Besides, it is an absurdity. I thought as I was looking at H.’s things this morning of what Préault used to say of Pradier: “*Il partait tous les matins pour la Grèce et arrivait tous les soirs Rue de Bréda.*” Pose your goddesses as you please—they are *grisettes* all the same.’

‘All very well for you critics,’ growled a man smoking a long pipe beside him; ‘but the artist must

live, and the *bourgeois* will have subjects. He won't have anything to do with your "notes"—and "impressions"—and "arrangements." When you present him with the view, served hot, from your four-pair back—he buttons up his pockets and abuses you. He wants his stories and his sentiment. And where the deuce is the sentiment to be got? I should be greatly obliged to anyone who would point me to a little of the commodity. The Greeks are already ridiculous,—and as for religion——'

The speaker threw back his head and laughed silently.

'Ah! I agree with you,' said the other emphatically; 'the religious pictures this year are really too bad. Christianity is going too fast—for the artist.'

'And the sceptics are becoming bores,' cried the painter; 'they take themselves too seriously. It is, after all, only another dogmatism. One should believe in nothing—not even in one's doubts.'

'Yes,' replied the journalist, knocking out his pipe, with a sardonic little smile—'strange fact! One may swim in free thought and remain as *banal* as a bishop all the time.'

'I say,' shouted a fair-haired youth opposite, 'who has seen C.'s Holy Family? Who knows where he got his Madonna?'

Nobody knew, and the speaker had the felicity of imparting an entirely fresh scandal to attentive ears. The mixture in the story of certain brutalities of modern

manners with names and things still touching or sacred for the mass of mankind had the old Voltairean flavour. But somehow, presented in this form and at this moment, David no longer found it attractive. He sat nursing his knee, his dark brows drawn together, studying the story-teller, whose florid Norman complexion and blue eyes were already seared by a vicious experience.

The tale, however, was interrupted and silenced by the first notes of a piano. The room was now full, and a young actor from the Gymnase company was about to give a musical sketch. The subject of it was 'St. Francis and Santa Clara.'

This performance was perhaps more wittily broad than anything which had gone before. The audience was excessively amused by it. It was indeed the triumph of the evening, and nothing could exceed the grace and point of the little speech in which M. Edmond, the manager of the café, thanked the accomplished singer afterwards.

While it was going on, David, always with that poignant, shrinking thought of Elise at his heart, looked round to see if there were any women present. Yes, there were three. Two were young, outrageously dressed, with sickly pretty tired faces. The third was a woman in middle life, with short hair parted at the side, and a strong, masculine air. Her dress was as nearly as possible that of a man, and she was smoking vigorously. The rough *bonhomie* of her

expression and her professional air reminded David once more of George Sand. An artist, he supposed, or a writer.

Suddenly, towards the end of the sketch, he became conscious of a tall figure behind the singer, a man standing with his hat in his hand, as though he had just come in, and were just going away. His fine head was thrown back, his look was calm, David thought disdainful. Bending forward he recognised M. Regnault, the hero of the morning.

Regnault had come in unperceived while the dramatic piece was going on ; but it was no sooner over than he was discovered, and the whole *salle* rose to do him honour. The generosity, the extravagance of the ovation offered to the young painter by this hundred or two of artists and men of letters were very striking to the foreign eye. David found himself thrilling and applauding with the rest. The room had passed in an instant from cynicism to sentiment. A moment ago it had been trampling to mud the tenderest feeling of the past ; it was now eagerly alive with the feeling of the present.

The new-comer protested that he had only dropped in, being in the neighbourhood, and must not stay. He was charming to them all, asked after this man's picture and that man's statue, talked a little about the studio he was organising at Tangiers, and then, shaking hands right and left, made his way through the crowd.

As he passed David, his quick eye caught the stranger and he paused.

‘Were you not in the Louvre this morning with Mademoiselle Delaunay?’ he asked, lowering his voice a little; ‘you are a stranger?’

‘Yes, an Englishman,’ David stammered, taken by surprise. Regnault’s look swept over the youth’s face, kindling in an instant with the artist’s delight in beautiful line and tint.

‘Are you going now?’

‘Yes,’ said David hurriedly. ‘It must be late?’

‘Midnight, past. May I walk with you?’

David, overwhelmed, made some hurried excuses to his two companions, and found himself pushing his way to the door, an unnoticed figure in the tumult of Regnault’s exit.

When they got into the street outside, Regnault walked fast southwards for a minute or so without speaking. Then he stopped abruptly, with the gesture of one shaking off a weight.

‘Pah! this Paris chokes me.’

Then, walking on again, he said, half-coherently, and to himself:

‘So vile,—so small,—so foul! And there are such great things in the world. *Beasts!*—*pigs!*—and yet so generous, so struggling, such a hard fight for it. So gifted,—many of them! What are you here for?’

And he turned round suddenly upon his companion. David, touched and captured he knew not how by the

largeness and spell of the man's presence, conquered his shyness and explained himself as intelligibly as he could:

An English bookseller, making his way in trade, yet drawn to France by love for her literature and her past, and by a blood-tie which seemed to have in it mystery and pain, for it could hardly be spoken of—the curious little story took the artist's fancy. Regnault did his best to draw out more of it, helped the young fellow with his French, tried to get at his impressions, and clearly enjoyed the experience to which his seeking artist's sense had led him.

'What a night!' he said at last, drawing a full draught of the May into his great chest. 'Stop and look down those streets in the moonlight. What surfaces,—what gradations,—what a beauty of multiplied lines, though it is only a piece of vulgar Haussmann! Indoors I can't breathe—but out of doors and at night this Paris of ours,—ah! she is still beautiful—*beautiful*! Now one has shaken the dust of that place off, one can feel it. What did you think of it?—tell me.'

He stooped and looked into his companion's face. David was tall and lithe, but Regnault was at least half a head taller and broader in proportion.

David walked along for a minute without answering. He too, and even more keenly than Regnault, was conscious of escape and relief. A force which had, as it were, taken life and feeling by the throat had relaxed its grip. He disengaged himself with mingled loathing

and joy. But in his shyness he did not know how to express himself, fearing, too, to wound the Frenchman. At last he said slowly :

‘ I never saw so many clever people together in my life.’

The words were bald, but Regnault perfectly understood what was meant by them, as well as by the troubled consciousness of the black eyes raised to his. He laughed—shortly and bitterly.

‘ No, we don’t lack brains, we French. All the same I tell you, in the whole of that room there are about half-a-dozen people,—oh, not so many!—not nearly so many!—who will ever make a mark, even for their own generation, who will ever strike anything out of nature that is worth having—wrestle with her to any purpose. Why? Because they have every sort of capacity—every sort of cleverness—and *no character!*’

David walked beside him in silence. He thought suddenly of Regnault’s own picture—its strange cruelty and force, its craftsman’s brilliance. And the recollection puzzled him.

Regnault, however, had spoken with passion, and as though out of the fulness of some sore and long-familiar pondering.

‘ You never saw anything like that in England,’ he resumed quickly.

David hesitated.

‘ No, I never did. But I am a provincial, and I have seen nothing at all. Perhaps in London——’

‘No, you would see nothing like it in London,’ said Regnault decidedly. ‘Bah! it is not that you are more virtuous than we are. Who believes such folly? But your vice is grosser, stupider. Lucky for you! You don’t sacrifice to it the best young brain of the nation, as we are perpetually doing. Ah, *mon Dieu!*’ he broke out in a kind of despair, ‘this enigma of art!—of the artist! One flounders and blunders along. I have been floundering and blundering with the rest,—playing tricks—following this man and that—till suddenly—a door opens—and one sees the real world through for the first time!’

He stood still in his excitement, a smile of the most exquisite quality and sweetness dawning on his strong young face.

‘And then,’ he went on, beginning to walk again, and talking much more to the night than to his companion, ‘one learns that the secret of life lies in *feeling*—in the heart, not in the head. And no more limits than before!—all is still open, divinely open. Range the whole world—see everything, learn everything—till at the end of years and years you may perhaps be found worthy to be called an artist! But let art have her ends, all the while, shining beyond the means she is toiling through—her ends of beauty or of power. To spend herself on the mere photography of the vile and the hideous! what waste—what sacrilege!’

They had reached the Place de la Concorde, which lay bathed in moonlight, the silver fountains plashing,

the trees in the Champs-Élysées throwing their sharp yet delicate shadows on the intense whiteness of the ground, the buildings far away rising softly into the softest purest blue. Regnault stopped and looked round him with enchantment. As for David, he had no eyes save for his companion. His face was full of a quick responsive emotion. After an experience which had besmirched every ideal and bemocked every faith, the young Frenchman's talk had carried the lad once more into the full tide of poetry and romance. 'The secret of life lies in *feeling*, in the heart, not the head'—ah, *that* he understood! He tried to express his assent, his homage to the speaker; but neither he nor the artist understood very clearly what he was saying. Presently Regnault said in another tone:

'And they are such good fellows, many of them. Starving often—but nothing to propitiate the *bourgeois*, nothing to compromise the "dignity of art." A man will paint to please himself all day, paint, on a crust, something that won't and can't sell, that the world in fact would be mad to buy; then in the evening he will put his canvas to the wall, and paint sleeve-links or china to live. And so generous to each other: they will give each other all they have—food, clothes, money, knowledge. That man who gave that abominable thing about St. Francis—I know him, he has a little apartment near the Quai St.-Michel, and an invalid mother. He is a perfect angel to her. I could take off my hat to him whenever I think of it.'

His voice dropped again. Regnault was pacing along across the Place, his arms behind him, David at his side. When he resumed, it was once more in a tone of despondency.

‘There is an ideal; but so twisted, so corrupted! What is wanted is not less intelligence but *more*—more knowledge, more experience—something beyond this fevering, brutalising Paris, which is all these men know. They have got the poison of the Boulevards in their blood, and it dulls their eye and hand. They want scattering to the wilderness; they want the wave of life to come and lift them past the mud they are dabbling in, with its hideous wrecks and *débris*, out and away to the great sea, to the infinite beyond of experience and feeling! you, too, feel with me?—you, too, see it like that? Ah! when one has seen and felt Italy—the East,—the South—lived heart to heart with a wild nature, or with the great embodied thought of the past,—lived at large, among great things, great sights, great emotions, then there comes purification! There is no other way out—no, none!’

So for another hour Regnault led the English boy up and down and along the quays, talking in the frankest openest way to this acquaintance of a night. It was as though he were wrestling his own way through his own life-problem. Very often David could hardly follow. The joys, the passions, the temptations of the artist, struggling with the life of thought and aspiration, the craving to know everything, to feel every-

thing, at war with the hunger for a moral unity and a stainless self-respect—there was all this in his troubled, discursive talk, and there was besides the magic touch of genius, youth, and poetry.

‘Well, this is strange!’ he said at last, stopping at a point between the Louvre on the one hand and the Institute on the other, the moonlit river lying between. — ‘My friends come to me at Rome or at Tangiers, and they complain of me, “Regnault, you have grown morose, no one can get a word out of you”—and they go away wounded—I have seen it often. And it was always true. For months I have had no words. I have been in the dark, wrestling with my art and with this goading, torturing world, which the artist with his puny forces has somehow to tame and render. Then—the other day—ah! well, no matter!—but the dark broke, and there was light! and when I saw your face, your stranger’s face, in that crowd to-night, listening to those things, it drew me. I wanted to say my say. I don’t make excuses. Very likely we shall never meet again—but for this hour we have been friends. Good night!—good night! Look,—the dawn is coming!’

And he pointed to where, behind the towers of Notre-Dame, the first whiteness of the coming day was rising into the starry blue.

They shook hands.

‘You go back to England soon?’

‘In a—a—week or two.’

‘Only believe this—we have things better worth

seeing than 'Les Trois Rats'—things that represent us better. That is what the foreigner is always doing; he spends his time in wondering at our monkey tricks; there is no nation can do them so well as we; and the great France—the undying France!—disappears in a splutter of *blague*!

He leant over the parapet, forgetting his companion, his eyes fixed on the great cathedral, on the slender shaft of the Sainte Chapelle, on the sky filling with light.

Then suddenly he turned round, laid a quick hand on his companion's shoulder.

'If you ever feel inclined to write to me, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts will find me. Adieu.'

And drawing his coat round him in the chilliness of the dawn, he walked off quickly across the bridge.

David also hurried away, speeding along the deserted pavements till again he was in his own dark street. The dawn was growing from its first moment of mysterious beauty into a grey disillusioning light. But he felt no reaction. He crept up the squalid stairs to his room. It was heavy with the scent of the narcissus.

He took them, and stole along the passage to Elise's door. There were three steps outside it. He sat down on the lowest, putting his flowers beside him. There was something awful to him even in this nearness; he dare not have gone higher.

He sat there for long—his heart beating, beating.

Every part of his French experience so far, whether by sympathy or recoil, had helped to bring him to this intoxication of sense and soul. Regnault had spoken of the 'great things' of life. Had he too come to understand them—thus?

At last he left his flowers there, kissing the step on which they were laid, and which her foot must touch. He could hardly sleep; the slight fragrance which clung to the old bearskin in which he wrapt himself helped to keep him restless; it was the faint heliotrope scent he had noticed in her room.

CHAPTER VI

HE loves me—he does really! Poor boy!

The speaker was Elise Delaunay. She was sitting alone on the divan in her *atelier*, trying on a pair of old Pompadour shoes, with large faded rosettes and pink heels, which she had that moment routed out of a broker's shop in the Rue de Seine, on her way back from the Luxembourg with David. They made her feet look enchantingly small, and she was holding back her skirts that she might get a good look at them.

Her conviction of David's passion did not for some time lessen her interest in the shoes, but at last she kicked them off, and flung herself back on the divan, to think out the situation a little.

Yes, the English youth's adoration could no longer be ignored. It had become evident, even to her own acquaintances and comrades in the various galleries she was now haunting in this bye-time of the artistic year. Whenever she and he appeared together now, there were sly looks and smiles.

The scandal of it did not affect her in the least. She

belonged to Bohemia, so apparently did he. She had been perfectly honest till now; but she had never let any convention stand in her way. All her conceptions of the relations between men and women were of an extremely free kind. Her mother's blood in her accounted both for a certain coldness and a certain personal refinement which both divided and protected her from a great many of her acquaintance, but through her father she had been acquainted for years with the type of life and *ménage* which prevails among a certain section of the French artist class, and if the occasion were but strong enough she had no instincts inherited or acquired which would stand in the way of the gratification of passion.

On the contrary, her reasoned opinions so far as she had any were all in favour of *l'union libre*—that curious type of association which held the artist Théodore Rousseau for life to the woman who passed as his wife, and which obtains to a remarkable extent, with all those accompaniments of permanence, fidelity, and mutual service, which are commonly held to belong only to *l'union légale*, in one or two strata of French society. She was capable of sentiment; she had hidden veins of womanish weakness; but at the same time the little creature's prevailing temper was one of remarkable coolness and audacity. She judged for herself; she had read for herself, observed for herself. Such a temper had hitherto preserved her from adventures; but, upon occasion, it might as easily land her in one. She was at once a daughter of art and a daughter of the people, with a cross strain of gentle breeding and

intellectual versatility thrown in, which made her more interesting and more individual than the rest of her class.

‘We are a pair of Romantics out of date, you and I,’ she had said once to David, half mocking, half in earnest, and the phrase fitted the relation and position of the pair very nearly. In spite of the enormous difference of their habits and training they had at bottom similar tastes—the same capacity for the excitements of art and imagination, the same shrinking from the coarse and ugly sides of the life amid which they moved, the same cravings for novelty and experience.

David went no more to the ‘Trois Rats,’ and when, in obedience to Lenain’s recommendation, he had bought and begun to read a novel of the Goncourts, he threw it from him in a disgust beyond expression. *Her* talk, meanwhile, was in some respects of the freest; she would discuss subjects impossible to the English girl of the same class; she asked very few questions as to the people she mixed with; and he was, by now, perfectly acquainted with her view, that on the whole marriage was for the *bourgeois*, and had few attractions for people who were capable of penetrating deeper into the rich growths of life. But there was no *personal* taint or license in what she said; and she herself could be always happily divided from her topics. Their Bohemia was canopied with illusions, but the illusions on the whole were those of poetry.

Were all David’s illusions hers, however? *Love!*

She thought of it, half laughing, as she lay on the divan. She knew nothing about it—she was for *art*. Yet what a brow, what eyes, what a gait—like a young Achilles!

She sprang up to look at a sketch of him, dashed off the day before, which was on the easel. Yes, it was like. There was the quick ardent air, the southern colour, the clustering black hair, the young parting of the lips. The invitation of the eyes was irresistible—she smiled into them—the little pale face flushing.

But at the same moment her attention was caught by a sketch pinned against the wall just behind the easel.

‘Ah! my cousin, my good cousin!’ she said, with a little mocking twist of the mouth; ‘how strange that you have not been here all this time—never once! There was something said, I remember, about a visit to Bordeaux about now. Ah! well—*tant mieux*—for you would be rather jealous, my cousin!’

Then she sat down with her hands on her knees, very serious. How long since they met? A week. How long till the temporary closing of the Salon and the voting of the rewards? A fortnight. Well, should it go on till then? Yes or no? As soon as she knew her fate—or at any rate if she got her *mention*—she would go back to work. She had two subjects in her mind; she would work at home, and Taranne had promised to come and advise her. Then she would have no time for handsome English boys. But till then?

She took an anemone from a bunch David had

brought her, and began to pluck off the petals, alternating 'yes' and 'no.' The last petal fell to 'yes.'

'I should have done just the same if it had been "no,"' she said, laughing. '*Allons*, he amuses me, and I do him no harm. When I go back to work he can do his business. He has done none yet. He will forget me and make some money.'

She paced up and down the studio thinking again. She was conscious of some remorse for her part in sending the Englishman's sister to the Cervins. The matter had never been mentioned again between her and David; yet she knew instinctively that he was often ill at ease. The girl was perpetually in Montjoie's studio, and surrounded in public places by a crew of his friends. Madame Cervin was constantly in attendance no doubt, but if it came to a struggle she would have no power with the English girl, whose obstinacy was in proportion to her ignorance.

Elise had herself once stopped Madame Cervin on the stairs, and said some frank things of the sculptor, in order to quiet an uncomfortable conscience.

'Ah! you do not like Monsieur Montjoie?' said the other, looking hard at her.

Elise coloured, then she recovered herself.

'All the world knows that Monsieur Montjoie has no scruples, madame,' she cried angrily. 'You know it yourself. It is a shame. That girl understands nothing.'

Madame Cervin laughed.

‘Certainly she understands everything that she pleases, mademoiselle. But if there is any anxiety, let her brother come and look after her. He can take her where she wants to go. I should be glad indeed. I am as tired as a dog. Since she came it is one *tapage* from morning till night.’

And Elise retired, discomfited before those small malicious eyes. Since David’s adoration for the girl artist in No. 27 had become more or less public property, Madame Cervin, who had seen from the beginning that Louie was a burden on her brother, had decidedly the best of the situation.

‘Has she lent Montjoie money?’

Elise meditated. The little *bourgeoise* had a curious weakness for posing as the patron of the various artists in the house. ‘Very possible! and she looks on the Mænad as the only way of getting it back? She would sell her soul for a napoleon—I always knew that. *Canaille*, all of them!’

And the meditation ended in the impatient conclusion that neither she nor the brother had any responsibility. After all, any decent girl, French or English, could soon see for herself what manner of man was Jules Montjoie! And now for the ‘private view’ of a certain artistic club to which she had promised to take her English acquaintance. All the members of the club were young—of the new rebellious school of ‘*plein air*’—the afternoon promised to be amusing.

So the companionship of these two went on, and David passed from one golden day to another. How she lectured him, the little, vain, imperious thing; and how meek he was with her, how different from his Manchester self! The woman's cleverness filled the field. The man, wholly preoccupied with other things, did not care to produce himself, and in the first ardour of his new devotion kept all the self-assertive elements of his own nature in the background, caring for nothing but to watch her eyes as she talked, to have her voice in his ears, to keep her happy and content in his company.

Yet she was not taken in. With other people he must be proud, argumentative, self-willed—that she was sure of; but her conviction only made her realise her power over him with the more pleasure. His naïve respect for her own fragmentary knowledge, his unbounded admiration for her talent, his quick sympathy for all she did and was, these things little by little tended to excite, to preoccupy her.

Especially was she bent upon his artistic education. She carried him hither and thither, to the Louvre, the Luxembourg, the Salon, insisting with a feverish eloquence and invention that he should worship all that she worshipped—no matter if he did not understand!—let him worship all the same—till he had learnt his new alphabet with a smiling docility, and caught her very tricks of phrase. Especially were they haunters of the sculptures in the Louvre, where, because of the

difficulty of it, she piqued herself most especially on knowledge, and could convict him most triumphantly of a barbarian ignorance. Up and down they wandered, and she gave him eyes, whether for Artemis, or Aphrodite, or Apollo, or still more for the significant and troubling art of the Renaissance, French and Italian. She would flit before him, perching here and there like a bird, and quivering through and through with a voluble enjoyment.

Then from these lingerings amid a world charged at every point with the elements of passion and feeling, they would turn into the open air, into the May sunshine, which seemed to David's northern eyes so lavish and inexhaustible, carrying with it inevitably the kindness of the gods! They would sit out of doors either in the greenwood paths of the Bois, where he could lie at her feet, and see nothing but her face and the thick young wood all round them, or in some corner of the Champs-Élysées, or the sun-beaten Quai de la Conférence, where the hurrying life of the town brushed past them incessantly, yet without disturbing for a moment their absorption in or entertainment of each other.

Yet all through she maintained her mastery of the situation. She was a riddle to him often, poor boy! One moment she would lend herself in bewildering unexpected ways to his passion, the next she would allow him hardly the privileges of the barest acquaintance, hardly the carrying of her cloak, the touch of her hand.

But she had no qualms. It was but to last another fortnight; the friendship soothed and beguiled for her these days of excited waiting; and a woman, when she is an artist and a Romantic, may at least sit, smoke, and chat with whomsoever she likes, provided it be a time of holiday, and she is not betraying her art.

Meanwhile the real vulgarity of the nature—its insatiable vanity, its reckless ambition—was masked from David mainly by the very jealousy and terror which her artist's life soon produced in him. He saw no sign of other lovers; she had many acquaintances but no intimates; and the sketch in her room had been carelessly explained to him as the portrait of her cousin. But the *atelier*, and the rivalries it represented:—after three days with her he had learnt that what had seemed to him the extravagance, the pose of her first talk with him, was in truth the earnest, the reality of her existence. She told him that since she was a tiny child she had dreamed of *fame*—dreamed of people turning in the streets when she passed—of a glory that should lift her above all the commonplaces of existence, and all the disadvantages of her own start in life.

‘I am neither beautiful, nor rich, nor well-born; but if I have talent, what matter? Everyone will be at my feet. And if I have no talent—*grand Dieu!*—what is there left for me but to kill myself?’

And she would clasp her hands round her knees, and look at him with fierce, drawn brows, as though defying

him to say a single syllable in favour of any meaner compromise with fate.

This fever of the artist and the *concurrent*—in a woman above all—how it bewildered him! He soon understood enough of it, however, to be desperately jealous of it, to realise something of the preliminary bar it placed between any lover and the girl's heart and life.

Above all was he jealous of her teachers. Taranne clearly could beat her down with a word, reduce her to tears with an unfavourable criticism; then he had but to hold up a finger, to say, 'Mademoiselle, you have worked well this week, your drawing shows improvement, I have hopes of you,' to bring her to his feet with delight and gratitude. It was a *monstrous* power, this power of the master with his pupil! How could women submit to it?

Yet his lover's instincts led him safely through many perils. He was infinitely complaisant towards all her artistic talk, all her gossip of the *atelier*. It seemed to him—but then his apprehension of this strange new world was naturally a somewhat confused one—that Elise was not normally on terms with any of her fellow-students.

'If I don't get my *mention*,' she would say passionately, 'I tell you again it will be intrigue: it will be those *creatures* in the *atelier* who want to get rid of me—to finish with me. Ah! I will *crush* them all yet. And I have been good to them all—every one—I vow I have—even to that animal of a Bréal, who is always

robbing me of my place at the *concour*s, and taking mean advantages. *Misérables!*'

And the tears would stand in her angry eyes; her whole delicate frame would throb with fierce feeling.

Gradually he learnt how to deal with these fits, even when they chilled him with a dread, a conviction he dared not analyse. He would so soothe and listen to her, so ply her with the praises of her gift, which came floated to him on the talk of those acquaintances of hers to whom she had introduced him, that her most deep-rooted irritations would give way for a time. The woman would reappear; she would yield to the charm of his admiring eyes, his stammered flatteries; her whole mood would break up, dissolve into eager softness, and she would fall into a childish plaintiveness, saying wild generous things even of her rivals, now there seemed to be no one under heaven to take their part, and at last, even, letting her little hand fall into those eager brown ones which lay in wait for it, letting it linger there—forgotten.

Especially was she touched in his favour by the way in which Regnault had singled him out. After he had given her the history of that midnight walk, he saw clearly that he had risen to a higher plane in her esteem. She had no heroes exactly; but she had certain artistic passions, certain romantic fancies, which seemed to touch deep fibres in her. Her admiration for Regnault was one of these; but David soon understood that he

had no cause whatever to be jealous of it. It was a matter purely of the mind and the imagination.

So the days passed—the hot lengthening days. Sometimes in the long afternoons they pushed far afield into the neighbourhood of Paris. The green wooded hills of Sèvres and St. Cloud, the blue curves and reaches of the Seine, the flashing lights and figures, the pleasures of companionship, self-revelation, independence—the day was soon lost in these quick impressions, and at night they would come back in a fragrant moonlight, descending from their train into the noise and glitter of the streets, only to draw closer together—for surely on these crowded pavements David might claim her little arm in his for safety's sake—till at last they stood in the dark passage between his door and hers, and she would suddenly pelt him with a flower, spring up her small stairway, and lock her door behind her, before, in his emotion, he could find his voice or a farewell. Then he would make his way into his own den, and sit there in the dark, lost in a thronging host of thoughts and memories,—feeling life one vibrating delight.

At last one morning he awoke to the fact that only four days more remained before the date on which, according to their original plan, they were to go back to Manchester. He laughed aloud when the recollection first crossed his mind; then, having a moment to himself, he sat down and scrawled a few hasty words

to John. Business detained him yet a while—would detain him a few weeks—let John manage as he pleased, his employer trusted everything to him—and money was enclosed. Then he wrote another hurried note to the bank where he had placed his six hundred pounds. Let them send him twenty pounds at once, in Bank of England notes. He felt himself a young king as he gave the order—king of this mean world and of its dross. All his business projects had vanished from his mind. He could barely have recalled them if he had tried. During the first days of his acquaintance with Elise he had spent a few spare hours in turning over the boxes on the quays, in talks with booksellers in the Rue de Seine or the Rue de Lille, in preliminary inquiries respecting some commissions he had undertaken. But now, every hour, every thought were hers. What did money matter, in the name of Heaven? Yet when his twenty pounds came, he changed his notes and pocketed his napoleons with a vast satisfaction. For they meant power, they meant opportunity; every one should be paid away against so many hours by her side, at her feet.

Meanwhile day after day he had reminded himself of Louie, and day after day he had forgotten her again, absolutely, altogether. Once or twice he met her on the stairs, started, remembered, and tried to question her as to what she was doing. But she was still angry with him for his interference on the day of the pose; and he could get very little out of her. Let him only

leave her alone; she was not a school-child to be meddled with; that he would find out. As to Madame Cervin, she was a little fool, and her meanness in money matters was disgraceful; but she, Louie, could put up with her. One of these meetings took place on the day of his letters to the bank and to John. Louie asked him abruptly when he thought of returning. He flushed deeply, stammered, said he was inclined to stay longer, but of course she could be sent home. An escort could be found for her. She stared at him; then suddenly her black eyes sparkled, and she laughed so that the sound echoed up the dark stairs. David hotly inquired what she meant; but she ran up still laughing loudly, and he was left to digest her scornful amusement as best he could.

Not long after he found the Cervins' door open as he passed, and in the passage saw a group of people, mostly men; Montjoie in front, just lighting a cigar; Louie's black hat in the background. David hurried past; he loathed the sculptor's battered look, his insolent eye, his slow ambiguous manner; he still burnt with the anger and humiliation of his ineffectual descent on the man's domain. But Madame Cervin, catching sight of him from the back of the party, pursued him panting and breathless to his own door. Would Monsieur please attend to her; he was so hard to get hold of; never, in fact, at home! Would he settle her little bill, and give her more money for current expenses? Mademoiselle Louie required to be kept amused—*mon Dieu!*—

from morning to night! She had no objection, provided it were made worth her while. And how much longer did monsieur think of remaining in Paris?

David answered recklessly that he did not know, paid her bill for Louie's board and extras without looking at it, and gave her a napoleon in hand, wherewith she departed, her covetous eyes aglow, her mouth full of excited civilities.

She even hesitated a moment at the door and then came back to assure him that she was really all discretion with regard to his sister; no doubt monsieur had heard some unpleasant stories, for instance, of M. Montjoie; she could understand perfectly, that coming from such a quarter, they had affected monsieur's mind; but he would see that she could not make a sudden quarrel with one of her husband's old friends; Mademoiselle Louie (who was already her *chérie*) had taken a fancy to pose for this statue; it was surely better to indulge her than to rouse her self-will, but she could assure monsieur that she had looked after her as though it had been her own daughter.

David stood impatiently listening. In a few minutes he was to be with Elise at the corner of the Rue Lafitte. Of course it was all right!—and if it were not, he could not mend it. The woman was vulgar and grasping, but what reason was there to think anything else that was evil of her? Probably she had put up with Louie more easily than a woman of a higher type would have done. At any rate she was doing her best, and what

more could be asked of him than he had done? Louie behaved outrageously in Manchester; he could not help it, either there or here. He had interfered again and again, and had always been a fool for his pains. Let her choose for herself. A number of old and long-hidden exasperations seemed now to emerge whenever he thought of his sister.

Five minutes later he was in the Rue Lafitte.

It was Elise's caprice that they should always meet in this way, out of doors; at the corner of their own street; on the steps of the Madeleine; beneath the Vendôme Column; in front of a particular bonbon shop; or beside the third tree from the Place de la Concorde in the northern alley of the Tuileries Gardens. He had been only once inside her studio since the first evening of their acquaintance.

His mind was full of excitement, for the Salon had been closed since the day before; and the awards of the jury would be informally known, at least in some cases, by the evening. Elise's excitement since the critical hours began had been pitiful to see. As he stood waiting he gave his whole heart to her and her ambitions, flinging away from him with a passionate impatience every other interest, every other thought.

When she came she looked tired and white. 'I can't go to galleries, and I can't paint,' she said, shortly. 'What shall we do?'

Her little black hat was drawn forward, but through

the dainty veil he could see the red spot on either cheek. Her hands were pushed deep into the pockets of her light grey jacket, recalling the energetic attitude in which she had stood over Louie on the occasion of their first meeting. He guessed at once that she had not slept, and that she was beside herself with anxiety. How to manage her?—how to console her? He felt himself so young and raw; yet already his passion had awakened in him a hundred new and delicate perceptions.

‘Look at the weather!’ he said to her. ‘Come out of town! let us make for the Gare St. Lazare, and spend the day at St. Germain.’

She hesitated.

‘Taranne will write to me directly he knows—directly! He might write any time this evening. No, no!—I can’t go! I must be on the spot.’

‘He can’t write *before* the evening. You said yourself before seven nothing could be known. We will get back in ample time, I swear.’

They were standing in the shade of a shop awning, and he was looking down at her, eagerly, persuasively. She had a debate with herself, then with a despairing gesture of the hands, she turned abruptly—

‘Well then—to the station!’

When they had started, she lay back in the empty carriage he had found for her, and shut her eyes. The air was oppressive, for the day before had been showery, and the heat this morning was a damp heat which

relaxed the whole being. But before the train moved, she felt a current of coolness, and hastily looking up she saw that David had possessed himself of the cheap fan which had been lying on her lap, and was fanning her with his gaze fixed upon her, a gaze which haunted her as her eyelids fell again.

Suddenly she fell into an inward perplexity, an inward impatience on the subject of her companion, and her relation to him. It had been all very well till yesterday! But now the artistic and professional situation had become so strained, so intense, she could hardly give him a thought. His presence there, and its tacit demands upon her, tried her nerves. Her mind was full of a hundred *misères d'atelier*, of imaginary enemies and intrigues; one minute she was all hope, the next all fear; and she turned sick when she thought of Taranne's letter.

What had she been entangling herself for? she whose whole life and soul belonged to art and ambition! This comradeship, begun as a caprice, an adventure, was becoming too serious. It must end!—end probably to-day, as she had all along determined. Then, as she framed the thought, she became conscious of a shrinking, a difficulty, which enraged and frightened her.

She sat up abruptly and threw back her veil.

David made a little exclamation as he dropped the fan.

‘Yes!’ she said, looking at him with a little frown, ‘yes—what did you say?’

Then she saw that his whole face was working with emotion.

‘I wish you would have stayed like that,’ he said, in a voice which trembled.

‘Why?’

‘Because—because it was so sweet!’

She gave a little start, and a sudden red sprang into her cheek.

His heart leapt. He had never seen her blush for any word of his before.

‘I prefer the air itself,’ she said, bending forward and looking away from him out of the open window at the villas they were passing.

Yet, all the while, as the country houses succeeded each other and her eyes followed them, she saw not their fragrant, flowery gardens, but the dark face and tall young form opposite. He was handsomer even than when she had seen him first—handsomer far than her portrait of him. Was it the daily commerce with new forms of art and intelligence which Paris and her companionship had brought him?—or simply the added care which a man in love instinctively takes of the little details of his dress and social conduct?—which had given him this look of greater maturity, greater distinction? Her heart fluttered a little—then she fell back on the thought of Taranne’s letter.

They emerged from the station at St. Germain into a fierce blaze of sun, which burned on the square red

mass of the old château, and threw a blinding glare on the white roads.

‘Quick! for the trees!’ she said, and they both hurried over the open space which lay between them and the superb chestnut grove which borders the famous terrace. Once there all was well, and they could wander from alley to alley in a green shade, the white blossom-spikes shining in the sun overhead, and to their right the blue and purple plain, with the Seine winding and dimpling, the river polders with their cattle, and far away the dim heights of Montmartre just emerging behind the great mass of Mont Valérien, which blocked the way to Paris. Such lights and shades, such spring leaves, such dancing airs!

Elise drew a long breath, slipped off her jacket which he made a joy of carrying, and loosened the black lace at her throat which fell so prettily over the little pink cotton underneath.

Then she looked at her companion unsteadily. There was excitement in this light wind, this summer sun. Her great resolve to ‘end it’ began to look less clear to her. Nay, she stood still and smiled up into his face, a very siren of provocation and wild charm—the wind blowing a loose lock about her eyes.

‘Is this better than England—than your Manchester?’ she asked him scornfully, and he—traitor!—flinging out of his mind all the bounties of an English May, all his memories of the whitethorn and waving fern and foaming streams set in the deep purple breast of

the Scout—vowed to her that nowhere else could there be spring or beauty or sunshine, but only here in France and at St. Germain.

At this she smiled and blushed—no woman could have helped the blush. In truth, his will, steadily bent on one end, while hers was distracted by half a dozen different impulses, was beginning to affect her in a troubling, paralysing way. For all her parade of a mature and cynical enlightenment, she was just twenty; it was such a May day as never was; and when once she had let herself relax towards him again, the inward ache of jealous ambition made this passionate worship beside her, irrelevant as it was, all the more soothing, all the more luring.

Still she felt that something must be done to stem the tide, and again she fell back upon luncheon. They had bought some provisions on their way to the station in Paris. He might subsist on scenery and æsthetics if he pleased—as for her, she was a common person with common needs, and must eat.

‘Oh, not here!’ he cried, ‘why, this is all in public. Look at the nursemaids, and the boys playing, and the carriages on the terrace. Come on a little farther. You remember that open place with the thorns and the stream?—there we should be in peace.’

She did not know that she wanted to be in peace; but she gave way.

So they wandered on past the chestnuts into the tangled depths of the old forest. A path sunk in

brambles and fern took them through beech wood to the little clearing David had in his mind. A tiny stream much choked by grass and last year's leaves ran along one side of it. A fallen log made a seat, and the beech trees spread their new green fans overhead, or flung them out to right and left around the little space, and for some distance in front, till the green sprays and the straight grey stems were lost on all sides in a brownish pinkish mist which betrayed a girdle of oaks not yet conquered by the summer.

She took her seat on the log, and he flung himself beside her. Out came the stores in his pockets, and once more they made themselves childishly merry over a scanty meal, which left them still hungry.

Then for an hour or two they sat lounging and chattering in the warm shade, while the gentle wind brought them every spring scent, every twitter of the birds, every swaying murmur of the forest. David lay on his back against the log, his eyes now plunging into the forest, now watching the curls of smoke from his pipe mounting against the background of green, or the moist fleecy clouds which seemed to be actually tangled in the tree-tops, now fixed as long as they dared on his companion's face. She was not beautiful? Let her say it! For she had the softest mouth which drooped like a child with a grievance when she was silent, and melted into the subtlest curves when she talked. She had, as a rule, no colour, but her clear paleness, as contrasted with the waves of her light-gold hair, seemed to him

an exquisite beauty. The eyebrows had an oriental trick of mounting at the corners, but the effect, taken with the droop of the mouth, was to give the face in repose a certain charming look of delicate and plaintive surprise. Above all it was her smallness which entranced him; her feet and hands, her tiny waist, the *finesse* of her dress and movements. All the women he had ever seen, Lucy and Dora among them, served at this moment only to make a foil in his mind for this little Parisian beside him.

How she talked this afternoon! In her quick reaction towards him she was after all more the woman than she had ever been. She chattered of her forlorn childhood, of her mother's woes and her father's iniquities, using the frankest language about these last; then of herself and her troubles. He listened and laughed; his look as she poured herself out to him was in itself a caress. Moreover, unconsciously to both, their relation had changed somewhat. The edge of his first ignorance and shyness had rubbed off. He was no longer a mere slave at her feet. Rather a new and sweet equality seemed at last after all these days to have arisen between them; a bond more simple, more natural. Every now and then he caught his breath under the sense of a coming crisis; meanwhile the May day was a dream of joy, and life an intoxication.

But he controlled himself long, being indeed in desperate fear of breaking the spell which held her to him

this heavenly afternoon. The hours slipped by; the air grew stiller and sultrier. Presently, just as the sun was sinking into the western wood, a woman, carrying a bundle and with a couple of children, crossed the glade. One child was on her arm; the other, whimpering with heat and fatigue, dragged wearily behind her, a dead weight on its mother's skirts. The woman looked worn out, and was scolding the crying child in a thin exasperated voice. When she came to the stream, she put down her bundle, and finding a seat by the water, she threw back her cotton bonnet and began to wipe her brow, with long breaths which were very near to groans. Then the child on her lap set up a shout of hunger, while the child behind her began to cry louder than before. The woman hastily raised the baby, unfastened her dress, and gave it the breast, so stifling its cries; then, first slapping the other child with angry vehemence, she groped in the bundle for a piece of sausage roll, and by dint of alternately shaking the culprit and stuffing the food into its poor open mouth, succeeded in reducing it to a chewing and sobbing silence. The mother herself was clearly at the last gasp, and when at length the children were quiet, as she turned her harshly outlined head so as to see who the other occupants of the glade might be, her look had in it the dull hostility of the hunted creature whose powers of self-defence are almost gone.

But she could not rest long. After ten minutes, at longest, she dragged herself up from the grass with

another groan, and they all disappeared into the trees, one of the children crying again—a pitiable trio.

Elise had watched the group closely, and the sight seemed in some unexplained way to chill and irritate the girl.

‘There is one of the drudges that men make,’ she said bitterly, looking after the woman.

‘Men?’ he demurred; ‘I suspect the husband is a drudge too.’

‘Not he!’ she cried. ‘At least he has liberty, choice, comrades. He is not battered out of all pleasure, all individuality, that other human beings may have their way and be cooked for, and this wretched human race may last. The woman is always the victim, say what you like. But for *some* of us at least there is a way out!’

She looked at him defiantly.

A tremor swept through him under the suddenness of this jarring note. Then a delicious boldness did away with the tremor. He met her eyes straight.

‘Yes—*love* can always find it,’ he said under his breath—‘or make it.’

She wavered an instant, then she made a rally.

‘I know nothing about that,’ she said scornfully; ‘I was thinking of art. *Art* breaks all chains, or accepts none. The woman that has art is free, and she alone; for she has scaled the men’s heaven and stolen their sacred fire.’

She clasped her hands tightly on her knee ; her face was full of aggression.

David sat looking at her, trying to smile, but his heart sank within him.

He threw away his pipe, and laid his head down against the log, not far from her, drawing his hat over his eyes. So they sat in silence a little while, till he looked up and said, in a bright beseeching tone :

‘ Finish me that scene in *Hernani* !’

The day before, after a *matinée* of *Andromaque* at the Théâtre-Français, in a moment of rebellion and reaction against all things classical, they had both thrown themselves upon *Hernani*. She had read it aloud to him in a green corner of the Bois, having a faculty that way, and bidding him take it as a French lesson. He took it, of course, as a lesson in nothing but the art of making wild speeches to the woman one loves.

But now she demurred.

‘ It is not here.’

He produced it out of his pocket.

She shrugged her shoulders.

‘ I am not in the vein.’

‘ You said last week you were not in the vein,’ he said, laughing tremulously, ‘ and you read me that scene from *Ruy Blas*, so that when we went to see Sarah Bernhardt in the evening I was disappointed !’

She smiled, not being able to help it, for all flattery was sweet to her.

‘We must catch our train. I would never speak to you again if we were late!’

He held up his watch to her.

‘An hour—it is, at the most, half an hour’s walk.’

‘*Ah, mon Dieu!*’ she cried, clasping her hands. ‘It is all over, the vote is given. Perhaps Taranne is writing to me now, at this moment!’

‘Read—read! and forget it half an hour more.’

She caught up the book in a frenzy, and began to read, first carelessly and with unintelligible haste; but before a page was over, the artist had recaptured her, she had slackened, she had begun to interpret.

It was the scene in the third act where Hernani the outlaw, who has himself bidden his love, Doña Sol, marry her kinsman the old Duke, rather than link her fortunes to those of a ruined chief of banditti, comes in upon the marriage he has sanctioned, nay commanded. The bridegroom’s wedding gifts are there on the table. He and Doña Sol are alone.

The scene begins with a speech of bitter irony from Hernani. His friends have been defeated and dispersed. He is alone in the world; a price is on his head; his lot is more black and hopeless than before. Yet his heart is bursting within him. He had bidden her, indeed, but how could she have obeyed! *Traitress! false love! false heart!*

He takes up the jewels one by one.

‘*This necklace is brave work,—and the bracelet is rare—though not so rare as the woman who beneath a brow*

so pure can bear about with her a heart so vile! And what in exchange? A little love? Bah!—a mere trifle! . . . Great God! that one can betray like this—and feel no shame—and live!’

For answer, Doña Sol goes proudly up to the wedding casket, and, with a gesture matching his own, takes out the dagger from its lowest depth. ‘You stop halfway!’ she says to him calmly, and he understands. In an instant he is at her feet, tortured with remorse and passion, and the magical love scene of the act develops. What ingenuity of tenderness, yet what truth!

‘She has pardoned me, and loves me! Ah, who will make it possible that I too, after such words, should love Hernani and forgive him? Tears!—thou weepest, and again it is my fault! And who will punish me? for thou wilt but forgive again! Ah, my friends are all dead!—and it is a madman speaks to thee. Forgive! I would fain love—I know not how. And yet, what deeper love could there be than this? Oh! Weep not, but die with me! If I had but a world, and could give it thee!’

The voice of the reader quivered. A hand came upon the book and caught her hand. She looked up and found herself face to face with David, kneeling beside her. They stared at each other. Then he said, half choked:

‘I can’t bear it any more! I love you with all my heart—oh, you know—you know I do!’

She was stupefied for a moment, and then with a

sudden gesture she drew herself away, and pushed him from her.

‘Leave me alone—leave me free—this moment!’ she said passionately. ‘Why do you persecute and pursue me? What right have you? I have been kind to you, and you lay snares for me. I will have nothing more to do with you. Let me go home, and let us part.’

She got up, and with feverish haste tied her veil over her hat. He had fallen with his arms across the log, and his face hidden upon them. She paused irresolutely.

‘Monsieur David!’

He made no answer.

She bent down and touched him.

He shook his head.

‘No, no!—go!’ he said thickly.

She bit her lip. The breath under her little lace tippet rose and fell with furious haste. Then she sat down beside him, and with her hands clasped on her knee began to plead with him in tremulous light tones, as though they were a pair of children. Why was he so foolish? Why had he tried to spoil their beautiful afternoon? She must go. The train would not wait for them. But he must come too. He *must*.

After a little he rose without a word, gathered up the book and her wrap, and off they set along the forest path.

She stole a glance at him. It seemed to her that he walked as if he did not know where he was or who was beside him.

Her heart smote her. When they were deep in a hazel thicket, she stole out a small impulsive hand, and slipped it into his, which hung beside him. He started. Presently she felt a slight pressure, but it relaxed instantly, and she took back her hand, feeling ashamed of herself, and aggrieved besides. She shot on in front of him, and he followed.

So they walked through the chestnuts and across the white road to the station in the red glow of the evening sun. He followed her into the railway carriage, did her every little service with perfect gentleness; then when they started he took the opposite corner, and turning away from her, stared, with eyes that evidently saw nothing, at the villas beside the line, at the children in the streets, at the boats on the dazzling river.

She in her corner tried to be angry, to harden her heart, to possess herself only with the thought of Taranne's letter. But the evening was not as the morning. That dark teasing figure at the other end, outlined against the light of the window, intruded, took up a share in her reverie she resented but could not prevent—nay, presently absorbed it altogether. Absurd! she had had love made to her before, and had known how to deal with it. The artist must have comrades, and the comrades may play false; well, then the artist must take care of herself.

She had done no harm ; she was not to blame ; she had let him know from the beginning that she only lived for art. What folly, and what treacherous, inconsiderate folly, it had all been !

So she lashed herself up. But her look stole incessantly to that opposite corner, and every now and then she felt her lips trembling and her eyes growing hot in a way which annoyed her.

When they reached Paris she said to him imperiously as he helped her out of the carriage, ‘A cab, please !’

He found one for her, and would have closed the door upon her.

‘No, come in !’ she said to him with the same accent.

His look in return was like a blow to her, there was such an inarticulate misery in it. But he got in, and they drove on in silence.

When they reached the Rue Chantal she sprang out, snatched her key from the *concierge*, and ran up the stairs. But when she reached the point on that top passage where their ways diverged, she stopped and looked back for him.

‘Come and see my letter,’ she said to him, hesitating.

He stood quite still, his arms hanging beside him, and drew a long breath that stabbed her.

‘I think not.’

And he turned away to his own door.

But she ran back to him and laid her hand on his arm. Her eyes were full of tears.

‘*Please, Monsieur David. We were good friends this morning. Be now and always my good friend!*’

He shook his head again, but he let himself be led by her. Still holding him—torn between her quick remorse and her eagerness for Taranne’s letter, she unlocked her door. One dart for the table. Yes! there it lay. She took it up; then her face blanched suddenly, and she came piteously up to David, who was standing just inside the closed door.

‘Wish me luck, Monsieur David, wish me luck, as you did before!’

But he was silent, and she tore open the letter.
‘*Dieu!—mon Dieu!*’

It was a sound of ecstasy. Then she flung down the letter, and running up to David, she caught his arm again with both hands.

‘*Triomphe! Triomphe!* I have got my *mention*, and the picture they skied is to be brought down to the line, and Taranne says I have done better than any other pupil of his of the same standing—that I have an extraordinary gift—that I must succeed, all the world says so—and two other members of the jury send me their compliments. Ah! Monsieur David’—in a tone of reproach—‘be kind—be nice—congratulate me.’

And she drew back an arm’s-length that she might look at him, her own face overflowing with exultant

colour and life. Then she approached again, her mood changing.

‘It is too *detestable* of you to stand there like a statue! ah! that it is! For I never deceived you, no, never. I said to you the first night—there is nothing else for me in the world but art—nothing! Do you hear? This falling in love spoils everything—*everything*! Be friends with me. You will be going back to England soon. Perhaps—perhaps’—her voice faltered—‘I will take a week’s more holiday—Taranne says I ought. But then I must go to work—and we will part friends—always friends—and respect and understand each other all our lives, *n’est-ce pas?*’

‘Oh! let me go!’ cried David fiercely, his loud strained voice startling them both, and flinging her hand away from him, he made for the door. But impulsively she threw herself against it, dismayed to find herself so near crying, and shaken with emotion from head to foot.

They stood absorbed in each other; she with her hands behind her on the door, and her hat tumbling back from her masses of loosened hair. And as she gazed she was fascinated; for there was a grand look about him in his misery—a look which was strange to her, and which was in fact the emergence of his rugged and Puritan race. But whatever it was it seized her, as all aspects of his personal beauty had done from the beginning. She held out her little white hands to him, appealing.

‘No! no!’ he said roughly, trying to put her away, ‘*never—never—friends!* You may kill me—you shan’t make a child of me any more. Oh! my God!’ It was a cry of agony. ‘A man can’t go about with a girl in this way, if—if she is like you, and not——’ His voice broke—he lost the thread of what he was saying, and drew his hand across his eyes before he broke out again. ‘What—you thought I was just a raw cub, to be played with. Oh, I am too dull, I suppose, to understand! But I have grown under your hands anyway. I don’t know myself—I should do you or myself a mischief if this went on. Let me go—and go home to-night!’

And again he made a threatening step forward. But when he came close to her he broke down.

‘I would have worked for you so,’ he said thickly. ‘For your sake I would have given up my country. I would have made myself French altogether. It should have been marriage or no marriage as you pleased. You should have been free to go or stay. Only I would have laid myself down for you to walk over. I have some money. I would have settled here. I would have protected you. It is not right for a woman to be alone—anyone so young and so pretty. I thought you understood—that you must understand—that your heart was melting to me. I should have done your work no harm—I should have been your slave—you know that. That *cursed, cursed* art!’

He spoke with a low intense emphasis ; then turning away he buried his face in his hands.

‘ David ! ’

He looked up startled. She was stepping towards him, a smile of ineffable charm floating as it were upon her tears.

‘ I don’t know what is the matter with me ! ’ she said tremulously. ‘ There is trouble in it, I know ! It is the broken glass coming true. *Mais, voyons ! c’est plus fort que moi !* Do you care so much—would it break your heart—would you let me work—and never, *never* get in the way ? Would you be content that art should come first and you second ? I can promise you no more than that—not one little inch ! *Would* you be content ? Say ! ’

He ran to her with a cry. She let him put his arms round her, and a shiver of excitement ran through her.

‘ What does it mean ? ’ she said breathlessly. ‘ One is so strong one moment—and the next—like this ! Oh, why did you ever come ? ’

Then she burst into tears, hiding her eyes upon his breast.

‘ Oh ! I have been so much alone ! but I have got a heart somewhere all the same. If you will have it, you must take the consequences. ’

Awed by the mingling of his silence with that painful throbbing beneath her cheek, she looked up. He stooped—and their young faces met.

CHAPTER VII

DURING the three weeks which had ended for David and Elise in this scene of passion, Louie had been deliberately going her own way, managing even in this unfamiliar *milieu* to extract from it almost all the excitement or amusement it was capable of yielding her. All the morning she dragged Madame Cervin about the Paris streets; in the afternoon she would sometimes pose for Montjoie, and sometimes not; he had to bring her boubons and theatre tickets to bribe her, and learn new English wherewith to flatter her. Then in the evenings she made the Cervins take her to theatres and various entertainments more or less reputable, for which of course David paid. It seemed to Madame Cervin, as she sat staring beside them, that her laughs never fell in with the laughs of other people. But whether she understood or no, it amused her, and go she would.

A looker-on might have found the relations between Madame Cervin and her boarder puzzling at first sight. In reality they represented a compromise between considerations of finance and considerations of morals—as the wife of the *ancien prix de Rome* understood these

last. For the ex-modiste was by no means without her virtues or her scruples. She had ugly manners and ideas on many points, but she had lived a decent life at any rate since her marriage with a man for whom she had an incomprehensible affection, heavily as he burdened and exploited her; and though she took all company pretty much as it came, she had a much keener sense now than in her youth of the practical advantages of good behaviour to a woman, and of the general reasonableness of the *bourgeois* point of view with regard to marriage and the family. Her youth had been stormy; her middle age tended to a certain conservative philosophy of common sense, and to the development of a rough and ready conscience.

Especially was she conscious of the difficulties of virtue. When Elise Delaunay, for instance, was being scandalously handled by the talkers in her stuffy *salon*, Madame Cervin sat silent. Not only had she her own reasons for being grateful to the little artist, but with the memory of her own long-past adventures behind her she was capable by now of a secret admiration for an unprotected and struggling girl who had hitherto held her head high, worked hard, and avoided lovers.

So that when the artist's wife undertook the charge of the good-looking English girl she had done it honestly, up to her lights, and she had fulfilled it honestly. She had in fact hardly let Louie Grieve out of her sight since her boarder was handed over to her.

These facts, however, represent only one side of the

situation. Madame Cervin was now respectable. She had relinquished years before the *chasse* for personal excitement; she had replaced it by 'the *chasse* of the five-franc piece.' She loved her money passionately; but at the same time she loved power, gossip, and small flatteries. They distracted her, these last, from the depressing spectacle of her husband's gradual and inevitable decay. So that her life represented a balance between these various instincts. For some time past she had gathered about her a train of small artists, whom she mothered and patronised, and whose wild talk and pecuniary straits diversified the monotony of her own childless middle age. Montjoie, whose undoubted talent imposed upon a woman governed during all her later life by the traditions and the admirations of the artist world, had some time before established a hold upon her, partly dependent on a certain magnetism in the man, partly, as Elise had suspected, upon money relations. For the grasping little *bourgeoise* who would haggle for a morning over half a franc, and keep a lynx-eyed watch over the woman who came to do the weekly cleaning, lest the miserable creature should appropriate a crust or a cold potato, had a weak side for her artist friends who flattered and amused her. She would lend to them now and then out of her hoards; she had lent to Montjoie in the winter when, after months of wild dissipation, he was in dire straits and almost starving.

But having lent, the thought of her jeopardised money would throw her into agonies, and she would scheme

perpetually to get it back. Like all the rest of Montjoie's creditors she was hanging on the Mænad, which promised indeed to be the *chef-d'œuvre* of an indisputable talent, could that talent only be kept to work. When the sculptor—whose curiosity had been originally roused by certain phrases of Barbier's in his preliminary letters to his nephew, phrases embellished by Dubois' habitual *fanfaronnade*—had first beheld the English girl, he had temporarily thrown up his work and was lounging about Paris in moody despair, to Madame Cervin's infinite disgust. But at sight of Louie his artist's zeal rekindled. Her wild nature, her half-human eye, the traces of Greek form in the dark features—these things fired and excited him.

'Get me that girl to sit,' he had said to Madame Cervin, 'and the Mænad will be sold in six weeks!'

And Madame Cervin, fully determined on the one hand that Montjoie should finish his statue and pay his debts, and on the other that the English girl should come to no harm from a man of notorious character, had first led up to the sittings, and then superintended them with the utmost vigilance. She meant no harm—the brother was a fool for his pains—but Montjoie should have his sitter. So she sat there, dragon-like, hour after hour, knitting away with her little fat hands, while Louie posed, and Montjoie worked; and groups of the sculptor's friends came in and out, providing the audience

which excited the ambition of the man and the vanity of the girl.

So the days passed. At last there came a morning when Louie came out early from the Cervins' door, shut it behind her, and ran up the ladder-like stairs which led to David's room.

‘David!’

Her voice was pitched in no amiable key, as she violently shook the handle of the door. But, call and shake as she might, there was no answer, and after a while she paused, feeling a certain bewilderment.

‘It is ridiculous! He can't be out; it isn't half-past eight. It's just his tiresomeness.’

And she made another and still more vehement attempt, all to no purpose. Not a sound was to be heard from the room within. But as she was again standing irresolute, she heard a footstep behind her on the narrow stairs, and looking round saw the *concierge*, Madame Merichat. The woman's thin and sallow face—the face of a born pessimist—had a certain sinister flutter in it.

She held out a letter to the astonished Louie, saying at the same time with a disagreeable smile:

‘What is the use of knocking the house down when there is no one there?’

‘Where is he?’ cried Louie, not understanding her, and looking at the letter with stupefaction.

The woman put it into her hand.

‘No one came back last night,’ she said with a shrug. ‘Neither monsieur nor mademoiselle; and this morning I receive orders to send letters to “Barbizon, près Fontainebleau.”’

Louie tore open her letter. It was from David, and dated Barbizon. He would be there, it said, for nearly a month. If she could wait with Madame Cervin till he himself could take her home, well and good. But if that were disagreeable to her, let her communicate with him ‘chez Madame Pyat, Barbizon, Fontainebleau,’ and he would write to Dora Lomax at once, and make arrangements for her to lodge there, till he returned to Manchester. Some one could easily be found to look after her on the homeward journey if Madame Cervin took her to the train. Meanwhile he enclosed the money for two weeks’ *pension* and twenty francs for pocket money.

No other person was mentioned in the letter, and the writer offered neither explanation nor excuses.

Louie crushed the sheet in her hand, with an exclamation, her cheeks flaming.

‘So they are amusing themselves at Fontainebleau?’ inquired Madame Merichat, who had been leaning against the wall, twisting her apron and studying the English girl with her hard, malicious eyes. ‘Oh! I don’t complain; there was a letter for me too. Monsieur has paid all. But I regret for mademoiselle—if mademoiselle is surprised.’

She spoke to deaf ears.

Louie pushed past her, flew downstairs, and rang

the Cervins' bell violently. Madame Cervin herself opened it, and the girl threw herself upon her, dragged her into the *salon*, and then said with the look and tone of a fury:

‘Read that!’

She held out the crumpled letter. Madame Cervin adjusted her spectacles with shaking hands.

‘But it is in English!’ she cried in despair.

Louie could have beaten her for not understanding. But, herself trembling with excitement, she was forced to bring all the French words she knew to bear, and between them, somehow, piecemeal, Madame Cervin was brought to a vague understanding of the letter.

‘Gone to Fontainebleau!’ she cried, subsiding on to the sofa. ‘But why, with whom?’

‘Why, with that girl, that *creature*—*can’t* you understand?’ said Louie, pacing up and down.

‘Ah, I will go and find out all about that!’ said Madame Cervin, and hastily exchanging the blue cotton apron and jacket she wore in the mornings in the privacy of her own apartment for her walking dress, she whisked out to make inquiries.

Louie was left behind, striding from end to end of the little *salon*, brows knit, every feature and limb tense with excitement. As the meaning of her discovery grew plainer to her, as she realised what had happened, and what the bearing of it must be on herself and her own position, the tumult within her rose and rose. After that day in the Louvre her native

shrewdness had of course very soon informed her of David's infatuation for the little artist. And when it became plain, not only to her, but to all Elise Delaunay's acquaintance, there was much laughter and gossip on the subject in the Cervins' apartment. It was soon discovered that Louie had taken a dislike, which, perhaps, from the beginning had been an intuitive jealousy, to Elise, and had, moreover, no inconvenient sensitiveness on her brother's account, which need prevent the discussion of his love affairs in her presence. So the discussion went freely on, and Louie only regretted that, do what she would to improve herself in French, she understood so little of it. But the tone towards Elise among Montjoie's set, especially from Montjoie himself, was clearly contemptuous and hostile; and Louie instinctively enjoyed the mud which she felt sure was being thrown.

Yet, incredible as it may seem, with all this knowledge on her part, all this amusement at her brother's expense, all this blackening of Elise's character, the possibility of such an event as had actually occurred had never entered the sister's calculations.

And the reason lay in the profound impression which one side of his character had made upon her during the five months they had been together. A complete stranger to the ferment of the lad's imagination, she had been a constant and chafed spectator of his daily life. The strong self-restraint of it had been one of the main barriers between them. She knew that she was always jarring upon him, and that he was always blaming her

recklessness and self-indulgence. She hated his Spartan ways—his teetotalism, the small store he set by any personal comfort or luxury, his powers of long-continued work, his indifference to the pleasures and amusements of his age, so far as Manchester could provide them. They were a reflection upon her, and many a gibe she had flung out at him about them. But all the same these ways of his had left a mark upon her; they had rooted a certain conception of him in her mind. She knew perfectly well that Dora Lomax was in love with him, and what did he care? ‘Not a ha’porth!’ She had never seen him turn his head for any girl; and when he had shown himself sarcastic on the subject of her companions, she had cast about in vain for materials wherewith to retort.

And *now*! That he should fall in love with this French girl—that was natural enough; it had amused and pleased her to see him lose his head and make a fool of himself like other people; but that he should run away with her after a fortnight, without apparently a word of marrying her—leaving his sister in the lurch——

‘*Hypocrite!*’

She clenched her hands as she walked. What was really surging in her was that feeling of *ownership* with regard to David which had played so large a part in their childhood, even when she had teased and plagued him most. She might worry and defy him; but no sooner did another woman appropriate him, threaten to terminate for good that hold of his sister

upon him which had been so lately renewed, than she was flooded with jealous rage. David had escaped her—he was hers no longer—he was Elise Delaunay's! Nothing that she did could scandalise or make him angry any more. He had sent her money and washed his hands of her. As to his escorting her back to England in two or three weeks, that was just a lie! A man who takes such a plunge does not emerge so soon or so easily. No, she would have to go back by herself, leaving him to his intrigue. The very calmness and secretiveness of his letter was an insult. 'Mind your own business, little girl—go home to work—and be good!'—that was what it seemed to say to her. She set her teeth over it in her wild anger and pride.

At the same moment the outer door opened and Madame Cervin came bustling back again, bursting with news and indignation.

Oh, there was no doubt at all about it, they had gone off together! Madame Merichat had seen them come downstairs about noon the day before. He was carrying a black bag and a couple of parcels. She also was laden; and about halfway down the street, Madame Merichat, watching from her window, had seen them hail a cab, get into it, and drive away, the cab turning to the right when they reached the Boulevard.

Madame Cervin's wrath was loud, and stimulated moreover by personal alarm. One moment, remembering the scene in Montjoie's studio, she cried out, like the sister, on the brother's hypocrisy; the next she

reminded her boarder that there was two weeks' *pension* owing.

Louie smiled scornfully, drew out the notes from David's letter and flung them on the table. Then Madame Cervin softened, and took occasion to remember that condolence with the sister was 'at least as appropriate to the situation as abuse of the brother. She attempted some consolation, nay, even some caresses, but Louie very soon shook her off.

'Don't talk to me! don't kiss me!' she said impatiently.

And she swept out of the room, went to her own, and locked the door. There she threw herself face downwards on her bed, and remained there for some time hardly moving. But with every minute that passed, as it seemed, the inward smart grew sharper. She had been hardly conscious of it, at first, this smart, in her rage and pride, but it was there.

At last she could bear it quietly no longer. She sprang up and looked about her. There, just inside the open press which held her wardrobe, were some soft white folds of stuff. Her eye gleamed: she ran to the cupboard and took out the Mænad's dress. During the last few days she had somewhat tired of the sittings—she had at any rate been capricious and tiresome about them; and Montjoie, who was more in earnest about this statue than he had been about any work for years, was at his wit's end, first to control his own temper, and

next so to lure or drive his strange sitter as to manage her without offending her.

But to-day the dress recalled David—promised distraction and retaliation. She slipped off her tight gingham with hasty fingers, and in a few seconds she was transformed. The light folds floated about her as she walked impetuously up and down, studying every movement in the glass, intoxicated by the polished clearness and whiteness of her own neck and shoulders, the curves of her own grace and youth. Many a night, even after a long sitting, had she locked her door, made the gas flare, and sat absorbed before her mirror in this guise, throwing herself into one attitude after another, naïvely regretting that sculpture took so long, and that Montjoie could not fix them all. The ecstasy of self-worship in which the whole process issued was but the fruition of that childish habit which had wrought with childish things for the same end—with a couple of rushlights, an old sheet and primroses from the brook.

Her black abundant hair was still curled about her head. Well, she could pull it down in the studio—now for a wrap—and then no noise! She would slip downstairs so that madame should know nothing about it. She was tired of that woman always at her elbow. Let her go marketing and leave other people in peace.

But before she threw on her wrap she stood still a moment, her nostril quivering, expanding, one hand on her hip, the other swinging her Mænad's tambourine. She knew very little of this sculptor-man—she did not

understand him ; but he interested, to some extent over-awed, her. He had poured out upon her the coarsest flatteries, yet she realised that he had not made love to her. Perhaps Madame Cervin had been in the way. Well, now for a surprise and a *tête-à-tête* ! A dare-devil look—her mother's look—sprang into her eyes.

She opened the door, and listened. No one in the little passage, only a distant sound of rapid talking, which suggested to the girl that madame was at that moment enjoying the discussion of her boarder's affairs with monsieur, who was still in bed. She hurried on a waterproof which covered her almost from top to toe. Then, holding up her draperies, she stole out, and on to the public stairs.

They were deserted, and running down them she turned to the right at the bottom and soon found herself at the high studio door.

As she raised her hand to the bell she flushed with passion.

‘I'll let him see whether I'll go home whining to Dora, while he's amusing himself,’ she said under her breath.

The door was opened to her by Montjoie himself, in his working blouse, a cigarette in his mouth. His hands and dress were daubed with clay, and he had the brutal look of a man in the blackest of tempers. But no sooner did he perceive Louie Grieve's stately figure in the passage than his expression changed.

‘You—you here ! and for a sitting ?’

She nodded, smiling. Her look had an excitement which he perceived at once. His eye travelled to the white drapery and the beautiful bare arm emerging from the cloak; then he looked behind her for Madame Cervin.

No one—except this Mænad in a waterproof. Montjoie threw away his cigarette.

‘*Entrez, entrez, mademoiselle!*’ he said, bowing low to her. ‘When the heavens are blackest, then they open. I was in a mind to wring the Mænad’s neck three minutes ago. Come and save your portrait!’

He led her in through the ante-room into the large outer studio. There stood the Mænad on her revolving stand, and there was the raised platform for the model. A heap of clay was to one side, and water was dripping from the statue on to the floor. The studio light had a clear evenness; and, after the heat outside, the coolness of the great bare room was refreshing.

They stood and looked at the statue together, Louie still in her cloak. Montjoie pointed out to her that he was at work on the shoulders and the left arm, and was driven mad by the difficulties of the pose. ‘*Tonnerre de Dieu!* when I heard you knock, I felt like a murderer; I rushed out to let fly at someone. And there was my Mænad on the mat!—all by herself, too, without that little piece of ugliness from upstairs behind her. I little thought this day—this cursed day—was to turn out so. I thought you were tired of the poor

sculptor—that you had deserted him for good and all. Ah! *déesse—je vous salue!*’

He drew back from her, scanning her from head to foot, a new tone in his voice, a new boldness in his deep-set eyes—eyes which were already old. Louie stood instinctively shrinking, yet smiling, understanding something of what he said, guessing more.

There was a bull-necked strength about the man, with his dark, square, weather-beaten head, and black eyebrows, which made her afraid, in spite of the smooth and deprecating manner in which he generally spoke to women. But her fear of him was not unpleasant to her. She liked him; she would have liked above all to quarrel with him; she felt that he was her match.

He stepped forward, touched her arm, and took a tone of command.

‘Quick, mademoiselle, with that cloak!’

She mounted the steps, threw off her cloak, and fell into her attitude without an instant’s hesitation. Montjoie, putting his hands over his eyes to look at her, exclaimed under his breath.

It was perfectly true that, libertine as he was, he had so far felt no inclination whatever to make love to the English girl. Nor was the effect merely the result of Madame Cervin’s vigilance. Personally, for all her extraordinary beauty, his new model left him cold. Originally he had been a man of the most complex artistic instincts, the most delicate and varied perceptions. They and his craftsman’s skill were all founde-

ing now in a sea of evil living. But occasionally they were active still, and they had served him for the instant detection of that common egotistical paste of which Louie Grieve was made. He would have liked to chain her to his model's platform, to make her the slave of his fevered degenerating art. But she had no thrill for him. While he was working from her his mind was often running on some little *grisette* or other, who had not half Louie Grieve's physical perfection, but who had charm, provocation, wit—all that makes the natural heritage of the French woman, of whatever class. At the same time it had been an irritation and an absurdity to him that, under Madame Cervin's eye, he had been compelled to treat her with the ceremonies due to *une jeune fille honnête*. For he had at once detected the girl's reckless temper. From what social stratum did she come—she and the brother? In her, at least, there was some wild blood! When he sounded Madame Cervin, however, she, with her incurable habit of vain mendacity, had only put her lodger in a light which Montjoie felt certain was a false one.

But this morning! Never had she been so superb, so inspiring! All the vindictive passion, all the rage with David that was surging within her, did but give the more daring and decision to her attitude, and a wilder power to her look. Moreover, the boldness of her unaccompanied visit to him provoked and challenged him. He looked at her irresolutely; then with an effort he turned to his statue and fell to work. The

touch of the clay, the reaction from past despondency prevailed; before half an hour was over he was more enamoured of his task than he had ever yet been, and more fiercely bent on success. Insensibly as the time passed, his tone with her became more and more short, brusque, imperious. Once or twice he made some rough alteration in the pose, with the overbearing haste of a man who can hardly bear to leave the work under his hands even for an instant. When he first assumed this manner Louie opened her great eyes. Then it seemed to please her. She felt no regret whatever for the smooth voice; the more dictatorial he became the better she liked it, and the more submissive she was.

This went on for about a couple of hours—an orgie of work on his side, of excited persistence on hers. Her rival in the clay grew in life and daring under her eyes, rousing in her, whenever she was allowed to rest a minute and look, a new intoxication with herself. They hardly talked. He was too much absorbed in what he was doing; and she also was either bent upon her task, or choked by wild gusts of jealous and revengeful thought. Every now and then as she stood there, in her attitude of eager listening, the wall of the studio would fade before her eyes, and she would see nothing but a torturing vision of David at Fontainebleau, wrapt up in ‘that creature,’ and only remembering his sister to rejoice that he had shaken her off. *Ah!* How could she sufficiently avenge herself! how could

she throw all his canting counsels to the winds with most emphasis and effect !

At last a curious thing happened. Was it mere nervous reaction after such a strain of will and passion, or was it the sudden emergence of something in the sister which was also common to the brother—a certain tragic susceptibility, the capacity for a wild melancholy ? For, in an instant, while she was thinking vaguely of Madame Cervin and her money affairs, *despair* seized her—shuddering, measureless despair—rushing in upon her, and sweeping away everything else before it. She tottered under it, fighting down the clutch of it as long as she could. It had no words, it was like a physical agony. All that was clear to her for one lurid moment was that she would like to kill herself.

The studio swam before her, and she dropped into the chair behind her.

Montjoie gave a protesting cry.

‘Twenty minutes more!—*Courage!*’

Then, as she made no answer, he went up to her and put a violent hand on her shoulder—beside himself.

‘You *shall* not be tired, I tell you. Look up! look at me!’

Under the stimulus of his master’s tone she slowly recovered herself—her great black eyes lifted. He gazed into them steadily ; his voice sank.

‘You belong to me,’ he said with breathless rapidity.

‘Do you understand? What is the matter with you? What are those tears?’

A cry of nature broke from her.

‘My brother has left me—with that girl!’

She breathed out the words into the ears of the man stooping towards her. His great brow lifted—he gave a little laugh. Then eagerly, triumphantly, he seized her again by the arms. ‘*À la bonne heure!*’ Then it is plainer still. You belong to me and I to you. In that statue we live and die together. Another hour, and it will be a masterpiece. Come! one more!’

She drank in his tone of mad excitement as though it were wine, and it revived her. The strange grip upon her heart relaxed; the nightmare was dashed aside. Her colour came back, and, pushing him proudly away from her, she resumed her pose without a word.

CHAPTER VIII

‘Do you know, sir, that that good woman has brought in the soup for the second time? I can see her fidgeting about the table through the window. If we go on like this, she will depart and leave us to wait on ourselves. Then see if you get any soup out of *me*.’

David, for all answer, put his arm close round the speaker. She threw herself back against him, smiling into his face. But neither could see the other, for it was nearly dark, and through the acacia trees above them the stars glimmered in the warm sky. To their left, across a small grass-plot, was a tiny thatched house, buried under a great vine which embowered it all from top to base, and overhung by trees which drooped on to the roof, and swept the windows with their branches. Through a lower window, opening on to the gravel path, could be seen a small bare room, with a paper of coarse brown and blue pattern, brightly illuminated by a paraffin lamp, which also threw a square of light far out into the garden. The lamp stood on a table which was spread for a meal, and a stout woman, in a white cap and blue cotton apron, could be seen moving beside it.

‘Come in!’ said Elise, springing to her feet, and laying a compelling hand on her companion. ‘Get it over! The moon is waiting for us out there!’

And she pointed to where, beyond the roofs of the neighbouring houses, rose the dark fringe of trees which marked the edge of the forest.

They went in, hand in hand, and sat opposite each other at the little rickety table, while the peasant woman from whom they had taken the house waited upon them. The day before, after looking at the *auberge*, and finding it full of artists come down to look for spring subjects in the forest, they had wandered on searching for something less public, more poetical. And they had stumbled upon this tiny overgrown house in its tangled garden. The woman to whom it belonged had let it for the season, but till the beginning of her ‘let’ there was a month; and, after much persuasion, she had consented to allow the strangers to hire it and her services as *bonne*, by the week, for a sum more congruous with the old and primitive days of Barbizon than with the later claims of the little place to fashion and fame. As the lovers stood together in the *salon*, exclaiming with delight at its bare floor, its low ceiling, its old bureau, its hard sofa with the Empire legs, and the dilapidated sphinxes on the arms, the owner of the house looked them up and down, from the door, with comprehending eyes. Barbizon had known adventures like this before!

But she might think what she liked; it mattered

nothing to her lodgers. To 'a pair of' romantics out of date,' the queer overgrown place she owned was perfection, and they took possession of it in a dream of excitement and joy. From the top loft, still bare and echoing, where the highly respectable summer tenants were to put up the cots of their children, to the outside den which served for a kitchen, whence a wooden ladder led to a recess among the rafters, occupied by Madame Pyat as a bedroom ; from the masses of Virginia creeper on the thatched roof to the thicket of acacias and roses on the front grass-plot, and the high flowery wall which shut them off from the curious eyes of the street, it was all, in the lovers' feeling, the predestined setting for such an idyll as theirs.

And if this was so in the hot mornings and afternoons, how much more in the heavenly evenings and nights, when the forest lay whispering and murmuring under the moonlight, andt hey, wandering together arm in arm under the gaunt and twisted oaks of the Bas Bréau, or among the limestone blocks which strew the heights of this strange woodland, felt themselves part of the world about them, dissolved into its quivering harmonious life, shades among its shadows !

On this particular evening, after the hurried and homely meal, David brought Elise's large black hat, and the lace scarf which had bewitched him at St. Germain—oh, the joy of handling such things in this familiar, sacrilegious way !—and they strolled out into the long uneven street beyond their garden wall, on their way to

the forest. The old inn to the left was in a clatter. Two *diligences* had just arrived, and the horses were drooping and panting at the door. A maidservant was lighting guests across the belittered courtyard with a flaring candle. There was a red glimpse of the kitchen with its brass and copper pans, and on the bench outside the gateway sat a silent trio of artists, who had worked well and dined abundantly, and were now enjoying their last smoke before the sleep, to which they were already nodding, should overtake them. The two lovers stepped quickly past, making with all haste for that leafy mystery beyond cleft by the retreating whiteness of the Fontainebleau road—into which the village melted on either side.

Such moonlight! All the tones of the street, its white and greys, the reddish brown of the roofs, were to be discerned under it; and outside in the forest it was a phantasmagoria, an intoxication. The little paths they were soon threading, paths strewn with limestone dust, wound like white threads among the rocks and through the blackness of the firs. They climbed them hand in hand, and soon they were on a height looking over a great hollow of the forest to the plain beyond, as it were a vast cup overflowing with moonlight and melting into a silver sky. The width of the heavens, the dim immensity of the earth, drove them close together in a delicious silence. The girl put the warmth of her lover's arm between her and the overpowering greatness of a too august nature. The man,

on the other hand, rising in this to that higher stature which was truly his, felt himself carried out into nature on the wave of his own boundless emotion. That cold Deism he had held so loosely broke into passion. The humblest phrases of worship, of entreaty, swept across the brain.

‘Could one ever have guessed,’ he asked her, his words stumbling and broken, ‘that such happiness was possible?’

She shook her head, smiling at him.

‘Yes, certainly!—if one has read poems and novels. Nothing to me is ever *more* than I expect,—generally less.’

Then she broke off hesitating, and hid her face against his breast. A pang smote him. He cried out in the old commonplaces that he was not worthy, that she must tire of him, that there was nothing in him to hold, to satisfy her.

‘And three weeks ago,’ she said, interrupting him, ‘we had never heard each other’s names. Strange—life is strange! Well, now,’ and she quickly drew herself away from him, and holding him by both hands lightly swung his arms backwards and forwards, ‘this can’t last for ever, you know. In the first place—we shall *die*:’ and throwing herself back, she pulled against him childishly, a spray of ivy he had wound round her hat drooping with fantastic shadows over her face and neck.

‘Do you know what you are like?’ he asked her,

evading what she had said, while his eyes devoured her.

‘No!’

‘You are like that picture in the Louvre,—Da Vinci’s St. John, that you say should be a Bacchus.’

‘Which means that you find me a queer,—heathenish,—sort of creature?’ she said, still laughing and swaying. ‘So I am. Take care! Well now, a truce to love-making! I am tired of being meek and charming—this night excites me. Come and see the oaks in the Bas Bréau.’

And running down the rocky path before them she led him in and out through twisted leafy ways, till at last they stood among the blasted giants of the forest, the oaks of the Bas Bréau. In the emboldening daylight, David, with certain English wood scenes in his mind, would swear the famous trees of Fontainebleau had neither size nor age to speak of. But at night they laid their avenging spell upon him. They stood so finely on the broken ground, each of them with a kingly space about him; there was so wild a fantasy in their gnarled and broken limbs; and under the night their scanty crowns of leaf, from which the sap was yearly ebbing, had so lofty a remoteness.

They found a rocky seat in front of a certain leafless monster, which had been struck by lightning in a winter storm years before, and rent from top to bottom. The bare trunk with its torn branches yawning stood

out against the rest, a black and melancholy shape, preaching desolation. But Elise studied it coolly.

‘I know that tree by heart,’ she declared. ‘Corot, Rousseau, Diaz—it has served them all. I could draw it with my eyes shut.’

Then with the mention of drawing she began to twist her fingers restlessly.

‘I wonder what the *concours* was to-day,’ she said. ‘Now that I am away that Bréal girl will carry off everything. There will be no bearing her—she was never second till I came.’

David took a very scornful view of this contingency. ‘When you go back you will beat them all again; let them have their few weeks’ respite! You told me yesterday you had forgotten the *atelier*.’

‘Did I?’ she said with a strange little sigh. ‘It wasn’t true—I haven’t.’

With a sudden whim she pulled off his broad hat and threw it down. Reaching forward she took his head between her hands, and arranged his black curls about his brow in a way to suit her. Then, still holding him, she drew back with her head on one side to look at him. The moon above them, now at its full zenith of brightness, threw the whole massive face into strong relief, and her own look melted into delight.

‘There is no model in Paris,’ she declared, ‘with so fine a head.’ Then with another sigh she dropped her hold, and propping her chin on her hands, she stared straight before her in silence.

‘Do you imagine you are *the first*?’ she asked him presently, with a queer abruptness.

There was a pause.

‘You told me so,’ he said, at last, his voice quivering; ‘don’t deceive me—there is no fun in it—I believe it all!’

She laughed, and did not answer for a moment. He put out his covetous arms and would have drawn her to him, but she withdrew herself.

‘What did I tell you? I don’t remember. In the first place there was a cousin—there is always a cousin!’

He stared at her, his face flushing, and asked her slowly what she meant.

‘You have seen his portrait in my room,’ she said coolly.

He racked his brains.

‘Oh! that portrait on the wall,’ he burst out at last, in vain trying for a tone as self-possessed as her own, ‘that man with a short beard?’

She nodded.

‘Oh, he is not bad at all, my cousin. He is the son of that uncle and aunt I told you of. Only while they were rusting in the Gironde, he was at Paris learning to be a doctor, and enlarging his mind by coming to see me every week. When they came up to town to put in a claim to me, *they* thought me a lump of wickedness, as I told you; I made their hair stand on end. But Guillaume knew a good deal more about me; and *he* was not scandalised at all; oh dear, no. He

used to come every Saturday and sit in a corner while I painted—a long lanky creature, rather good-looking, but with spectacles—he has ruined his eyes with reading. Oh, he would have married me any day, and let his relations shriek as they please; so don't suppose, Monsieur David, that I have had no chances of respectability, or that my life began with you!' She threw him a curious look.

'Why do you talk about him?' cried David, beside himself. 'What is your cousin to either of us?'

'I shall talk of what I like,' she said wilfully, clasping her hands round her knees with the gesture of an obstinate child.

David stared away into the black shadow of the oaks, marvelling at himself—at the strength of that sudden smart within him, that half-frenzied restlessness and dread which some of her lightest sayings had the power to awaken in him.

Then he repented him, and turning, bent his head over the little hands and kissed them passionately. She did not move or speak. He came close to her, trying to decipher her face in the moonlight. For the first time since that night in the studio there was a film of sudden tears in the wide grey eyes. He caught her in his arms and demanded why.

'You quarrel with me and dictate to me,' she cried, wrestling with herself, choked by some inexplicable emotion, 'when I have given you everything—when I

am alone in the world with you—at your mercy—I who have been so proud, have held my head so high!’

He bent over her, pouring into her ear all the words that passion could find or forge. Her sudden attack upon him, poor fellow, seemed to him neither unjust nor extravagant. She *had* given him everything, and who and what was he that she should have thrown him so much as a look!

Gradually her mysterious irritation died away. The gentleness of the summer night, the serenity of the moonlight, the sea-like murmur of the forest—these things sank by little into their hearts, and in the calm they made, youth and love spoke again—siren voices!—with the old magic. And when at last they loitered home, they moved in a trance of feeling which wanted no words. The moon dropped slowly into the western trees; midnight chimes came to them from the villages which ring the forest; and a playing wind sprang up about them, cooling the girl’s hot cheeks, and freshening the verdurous ways through which they passed.

But in the years which came after, whenever David allowed his mind to dwell for a short shuddering instant on these days at Fontainebleau, it often occurred to him to wonder whether during their wild dream he had ever for one hour been truly happy. At the height of their passion had there been any of that exquisite give and take between them which may mark the simplest love of the rudest lovers, but which is in its essence moral,

a thing not of the senses but of the soul? There is nothing else which is vital to love. Without it passion dies into space like the flaming corona of the sun. With it, the humblest hearts may 'bear it out even to the edge of doom.'

There can be no question that after the storm of feeling, excitement, pity, which had swept her into his arms, he gained upon her vagrant fancy for a time day by day. Seen close, his social simplicity, his delicately tempered youth had the effect of great refinement. He had in him much of the peasant nature, but so modified by fine perception and wide-ranging emotion, that what had been coarseness in his ancestors was in him only a certain rich savour and fulness of being. His mere sympathetic, sensitive instinct had developed in him all the essentials of good manners, and books, poetry, observation had done the rest.

So that in the little matters of daily contact he touched and charmed her unexpectedly. He threw no veil whatever over his tradesman's circumstances, and enjoyed trying to make her understand what had been the conditions and prospects of his Manchester life. He had always, indeed, conceived his bookseller's profession with a certain dignity; and he was secretly proud, with a natural conceit, of the efforts and ability which had brought him so rapidly to the front. How oddly the Manchester names and facts sounded in the forest air! She would sit with her little head on one side listening; but privately he suspected that she understood very little

of it; that she accepted him and his resources very much in the vague with the *insouciance* of Bohemia.

He himself, however, was by no means without plans for the future. In the first flush of his triumphant passion he had won from her the promise of a month alone with him, in or near Fontainebleau—her own suggestion—after which she was to go back in earnest to her painting, and he was to return to Manchester and make arrangements for their future life together. Louie must be provided for, and after that his ideas about himself were already tolerably clear. In one of his free intervals, during his first days in Paris, he had had a long conversation one evening with the owner of an important bookshop on the Quai St.-Michel. The man badly wanted an English clerk with English connections. David made certain of the opening, should he choose to apply for it. And if not there, then somewhere else. With the consciousness of capital, experience, and brains, to justify him, he had no fears. Meanwhile, John should keep on the Manchester shop, and he, David, would go over two or three times a year to stock-take and make up accounts. John was as honest as the day, and had already learnt much.

But although his old self had so far reasserted itself; although the contriving activity of the brain was all still there, ready to be brought to bear on this new life when it was wanted; Elise could never mistake him, or the true character of this crisis of his youth. The self-surrender of passion had transformed, developed

him to an amazing extent, and it found its natural language. As she grew deeper and deeper into the boy's heart, and as the cloud of diffidence which had enwrapped him since he came to Paris gave way, so that even in this brilliant France he ventured at last to express his feelings and ideas, the poet and thinker in him grew before her eyes. She felt a new consideration, a new intellectual respect for him.

But above all his tenderness, his womanish consideration and sweetness amazed her. She had been hotly wooed now and then, but with no one, not even 'the cousin,' had she ever been on terms of real intimacy. And for the rest she had lived a rough-and-tumble, independent life, defending herself first of all against the big boys of the farm, then against her father, or her comrades in the *atelier*, or her Bohemian suitors. The ingenuity of service David showed in shielding and waiting upon her bewildered her—had, for a time, a profound effect upon her.

And yet!—all the while—what jars and terrors from the very beginning! He seemed often to be groping in the dark with her. Whole tracts of her thought and experience were mysteries to him, and grew but little plainer with their new relation. Little as he knew or would have admitted it, the gulf of nationality yawned deep between them. And those artistic ambitions of hers—as soon as they re-emerged on the other side of the first intoxication of passion—they were as much or

a jealousy and a dread to him as before. His soul was as alive as it had ever been to the threat and peril of them.

Their relation itself, too—to her, perhaps, secretly a guarantee—was to him a perpetual restlessness. *L'union libre* as the French artist understands it was not in his social tradition, whatever might be his literary assimilation of French ideas. He might passionately adopt and defend it, because it was her will; none the less was he, at the bottom of his heart, both ashamed and afraid because of it. From the very beginning he had let her know that she had only to say the word and he was ready to marry her instantly. But she put him aside with an impatient wave of her little hand, a nervous, defiant look in her grey eyes. Yet one day, when in the little village shop of Barbizon, a woman standing beside Elise at the counter looked her insolently over from head to foot, and took no notice of a question addressed to her on the subject of one of the forest routes, the girl felt an unexpected pang of resentment and shame.

One afternoon, in a lonely part of the forest, she strained her foot by treading on a loose stone among the rocks. Tired with long rambling and jarred by the shock she sank down, looking white and ready to cry. Pain generally crushed and demoralised her. She was capable, indeed, of setting the body at defiance on occasion; but, as a rule, she had no physical fortitude, and did not pretend to it.

David was much perplexed. So far as he knew, they were not near any of the huts which are dotted over the forest and provide the tourist with *consommations* and carved articles. There was no water wherewith to revive her or to bandage the foot, for Fontainebleau has no streams. All he could do was to carry her. And this he did, with the utmost skill, and with a leaping thrill of tenderness which made itself felt by the little elfish creature in the clasp of his arms, and in the happy leaning of his dark cheek to hers, as she held him round the neck.

‘Paul and Virginia!’ she said to him, laughing. “*He bore her in his arms!*”—all heroes do it—in reality, most women would break the hero’s back. Confess *I* am even lighter than you thought!’

‘As light as Venus’ doves,’ he swore to her. ‘Bid me carry you to Paris and see.’

‘Paris!’ At the mention of it she fell silent, and the corners of her mouth drooped into gravity. But he strode happily on, perceiving nothing.

Then when they got home, she limping through the village, he put on the airs of a surgeon, ran across to the grocer, who kept a tiny *pharmacie* in one corner of his miscellaneous shop, and conferred with him to such effect that the injured limb was soon lotioned and bandaged in a manner which made David inordinately proud of himself. Once, as he was examining his handiwork, it occurred to him that it was Mr. Ancrum who had taught him to use his fingers neatly. *Mr.*

Ancrum ! At the thought of his name the young man felt an inward shrinking, as though from contact with a cold and alien order of things. How hard to realise, indeed, that the same world contained Manchester with its factories and chapels, and this perfumed forest, this little overgrown house !

Afterwards, as he sat beside her, reading, as quiet as a mouse, so that she might sleep if the tumble-down Empire sofa did but woo her that way, she suddenly put up her arm and drew him down to her.

‘Who taught you all this—this tenderness?’ she said to him, in a curious wistful tone, as though her question were the outcome of a long reverie. ‘Was it your mother?’

David started. He had never spoken to her or to anyone of his mother, and he could not bring himself to do so now.

‘My mother died when I was five years old,’ he said reluctantly. ‘Why don’t you go to sleep, little restless thing? Is the bandage right?’

‘Quite. I can imagine,’ she said presently in a low tone, letting him go, ‘I can imagine one might grow so dependent on all this cherishing, so horribly dependent!’

‘Well, and why not?’ he said, taking up her hand and kissing it. ‘What are we made for, but to be your bondslaves?’

She drew her hand away, and let it fall beside her with an impatient sigh. The poor boy looked at her

with frightened eyes. Then some quick instinct came to the rescue, and his expression changed completely.

‘I have thought it all out,’ he began, speaking with a brisk, business-like air, ‘what I shall do at Manchester, and when I get back here.’

And he hung over her, chattering and laughing about his plans. What did she say to a garret and a studio somewhere near the Quai St.-Michel, in the Quartier Latin, rooms whence they might catch a glimpse of the Seine and Notre-Dame, where she would be within easy reach of Taranne’s studio, and the Luxembourg, and the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and the Louvre, rooms where after their day’s work they might meet, shut out the world and let in heaven—a home consecrate at once to art and love?

The quick bright words flowed without a check; his eye shone as though it caught the light of the future. But she lay turned away from him, silent, till at last she stopped him with a restless gesture.

‘Don’t—don’t talk like that! As soon as one dares to reckon on Him—*le bon Dieu* strikes—just to let one know one’s place. And don’t drive me mad about my art! You saw me try to draw this morning; you might be quiet about it, I think, *par pitié*! If I ever had any talent—which is not likely, or I should have had some notices of my pictures by this time—it is all dead and done for.’

And turning quite away from him, she buried her face in the cushion.

‘Look here,’ he said to her, smiling and stooping, ‘shall I tell you something? I forgot it till now.’

She shook her head, but he went on:

‘You remember this morning while I was waiting for you, I went into the inn to ask about the way to the Gorges d’Affremont. I had your painting things with me. I didn’t know whether you wanted them or not, and I laid them down on the table in the *cour*, while I went in to speak to madame. Well, when I came out, there were a couple of artists there, those men who have been here all the time painting, and they had undone the strap and were looking at the sketch—you know, that bit of beechwood with the rain coming on. I rushed at them. But they only grinned, and one of them, the young man with the fair moustache, sent you his compliments. You must have, he said, “very remarkable dispositions indeed.” Perhaps I looked as if I knew that before! Whose pupil were you? I told him, and he said I was to tell you to stick to Taranne. You were one of the *peintres de tempérament*, and it was they especially who must learn their grammar, and learn it from the classics; and the other man, the old bear who never speaks to anybody, nodded and looked at the sketch again, and said it was “amusing—not bad at all,” and you might make something of it for the next Salon.’

Cunning David! By this time Elise had her arm round his neck, and was devouring his face with her keen eyes. Everything was shaken off—the pain

of her foot, melancholy, fatigue—and all the horizons of the soul were bright again. She had a new idea!—what if she were to combine his portrait with the beech-wood sketch, and make something large and important of it? He had the head of a poet—the forest was in its most poetical moment. Why not pose him at the foot of the great beech to the left, give him a book dropping from his hand, and call it ‘*Rêverie*’?

For the rest of the day she talked or sketched incessantly. She would hardly be persuaded to give her bandaged foot the afternoon’s rest, and by eight o’clock next morning they were off to the forest, she limping along with a stick.

Two or three days of perfect bliss followed. The picture promised excellently. Elise was in the most hopeful mood, alert and merry as a bird. And when they were driven home by hunger, the work still went on. For they had turned their top attic into a studio, and here as long as the light lasted she toiled on, wrestling with the head and the difficulties of the figure. But she was determined to make it substantially a picture *en plein air*. Her mind was full of all the daring conceptions and ideals which were then emerging in art, as in literature, from the decline of Romanticism. The passion for light, for truth, was, she declared, penetrating, and revolutionising the whole artistic world. Delacroix had a studio to the south; she also would ‘bedare the sun.’

At the end of the third day she threw herself on

him in a passion of gratitude and delight, lifting her soft mouth to be kissed.

‘Embrasse-moi ! Embrasse-moi ! Blague à part,—je commence à me sentir artiste !’

And they wandered about their little garden till past midnight, hand close in hand. She could talk of nothing but her picture, and he, feeling himself doubly necessary and delightful to her, overflowed with happiness and praise.

But next day things went less well. She was torn, overcome by the difficulties of her task. Working now in the forest, now at home, the lights and values had suffered. The general tone had neither an indoor nor an outdoor truth. She must repaint certain parts, work only out of doors. Then all the torments of the outdoor painter began : wind, which put her in a nervous fever, and rain, which, after the long spell of fine weather, began to come down on them, and drive them into shelter.

Soon she was in despair. She had been too ambitious. The landscape should have been the principal thing, the figure only indicated, a suggestion in the middle distance. She had carried it too far ; it fought with its surroundings ; the picture had no unity, no repose. Oh, for some advice ! How could one pull such a thing through without help ? In three minutes Taranne would tell her what was wrong.

In twenty-four hours more she had fretted herself ill. The picture was there in the corner, turned to the

wall; he could only just prevent her from driving her palette-knife through it. And she was sitting on the edge of the sofa, silent, a book on her knee, her hands hanging beside her, and her feverish eyes wandering—wandering round the room, if only they might escape from David, might avoid seeing him—or so he believed. Horrible! It was borne in upon him that in this moment of despair he was little more to her than the witness, the occasion, of her discomfiture.

Oh! his heart was sore. But he could do nothing. Caresses, encouragements, reproaches, were alike useless. For some time she would make no further attempts at drawing; nor would she be wooed and comforted. She held him passively at arm's length, and he could make nothing of her. It was the middle of their third week; still almost the half left of this month she had promised him. And already it was clear to him that he and love had lost their first hold, and that she was consumed with the unspoken wish to go back to Paris, and the *atelier*. Ah, no!—no! With a fierce yet dumb tenacity he held her to her bargain. Those weeks were his; they represented his only hope for the future; she *should* not have them back.

But he, too, fell into melancholy and silence, and on the afternoon when this change in him first showed itself she was, for a time, touched, ashamed. A few pale smiles returned for him, and in the evening, as he was sitting by the open window, a newspaper on his knee, staring into vacancy, she came up to him,

knelt beside him, and drew his half-reluctant arm about her. Neither said anything, but gradually her presence there, on his breast, thrilled through all his veins, filled his heart to bursting. The paper slid away; he put both arms about her, and bowed his head on hers. She put up her small hand, and felt the tears on his cheek. Then a still stronger repentance woke up in her.

‘*Pauvre enfant !*’ she said, pushing herself away from him, and tremulously drying his eyes. ‘Poor Monsieur David—I make you very unhappy! But I warned you—oh, I *warned* you! What evil star made you fall in love with me?’

In answer he found such plaintive and passionate things to say to her that she was fairly melted, and in the end there was an effusion on both sides, which seemed to bring back their golden hours. But at bottom, David’s sensitive instinct, do what he would to silence it, told him, in truth, that all was changed. He was no longer the happy and triumphant lover. He was the beggar, living upon her alms.

CHAPTER IX

NEXT morning David went across to the village shop to buy some daily necessities, and found a few newspapers lying on the counter. He bought a *Débats*, seeing that there was a long critique of the Salon in it, and hurried home with it to Elise. She tore it open and rushed through the article, putting him aside that he might not look over her. Her face blanched as she read, and at the end she flung the paper from her, and tottering to a chair sat there motionless, staring straight before her. David, beside himself with alarm, and finding caresses of no avail, took up the paper from the floor.

‘Let it alone!’ she said to him with a sudden imperious gesture. ‘There is a whole paragraph about Bréal—her fortune is made. *La voilà lancée—arrivée!* And of me, not a line, not a mention! Three or four pupils of Taranne—all beginners—but *my* name—nowhere! Ah, but no—it is too much!’

Her little foot beat the ground, a hurricane was rising within her.

David tried to laugh the matter off. ‘The man who wrote the wretched thing had been hurried—was an idiot, clearly, and what did one man’s opinion matter, even if it were paid for at so much a column?’

‘*Mais, tais-toi, donc !*’ she cried at last, turning upon him in a fury. ‘*Can’t* you see that everything for an artist—especially a woman—depends on the *protections* she gets at the beginning? How can a girl—helpless—without friends—make her way by herself? Some one must hold out a hand, and for me it seems there is no one—no one!’

The outburst seemed to his common sense to imply the most grotesque oblivion of her success in the Salon, of Taranne’s kindness—the most grotesque sensitiveness to a few casual lines of print. But it wrung his heart to see her agitation, her pale face, the handkerchief she was twisting to shreds in her restless hands. He came to plead with her—his passion lending him eloquence. Let her but trust herself and her gift. She had the praise of those she revered to go upon. How should the carelessness of a single critic affect her? *Imbéciles !*—they would be all with her, at her feet, some day. Let her despise them then and now! But his extravagances only made her impatient.

‘Nonsense!’ she said, drawing her hand away from him; ‘I am not made of such superfine stuff—I never pretended to be! Do you think I should be content to be an unknown genius? *Never !*—I must have my fame counted out to me in good current coin, that all the world may hear and see. It may be vulgar—I don’t care! it is so. *Ah, mon Dieu !*’ and she began to pace the room with wild steps, ‘and it is my fault—my fault! If I were there on the spot, I should

be remembered—they would have to reckon with me—I could keep my claim in sight. But I have thrown away everything—wasted everything—*everything!*'

He stood with his back to the window, motionless, his hand on the table, stooping a little forward, looking at her with a passion of reproach and misery; it only angered her; she lost all self-control, and in one mad moment she avenged on his poor heart all the wounds and vexations of her vanity. *Why* had he ever persuaded her? *Why* had he brought her away and hung a fresh burden on her life which she could never bear? Why had he done her this irreparable injury—taken all simplicity and directness of aim from her—weakened her energies at their source? Her only *milieu* was art, and he had made her desert it; her only power was the painter's power, and it was crippled, the fresh spring of it was gone. It was because she felt on her the weight of a responsibility, and a claim she was not made for. She was not made for love—for love at least as he understood it. And he had her word, and would hold her to it. It was madness for both of them. It was stifling—killing her!

Then she sank on a chair, in a passion of desperate tears. Suddenly, as she sat there, she heard a movement, and looking up she saw David at the door. He turned upon her for an instant, with a dignity so tragic, so true, and yet so young, that she was perforce touched, arrested. She held out a trembling hand, made a little

cry. But he closed the door softly, and was gone. She half raised herself, then fell back again.

‘If he had beaten me,’ she said to herself with a strange smile, ‘I could have loved him. *Mais !*’

She was all day alone. When he came back it was already evening ; the stars shone in the June sky, but the sunset light was still in the street and on the upper windows of the little house. As he opened the garden gate and shut it behind him, he saw the gleam of a lamp behind the acacia, and a light figure beside it. He stood a moment wrestling with himself, for he was wearied out, and felt as if he could bear no more. Then he moved slowly on.

Elise was sitting beside the lamp, her head bent over something dark upon her lap. She had not heard the gate open, and she did not hear his steps upon the grass. He came closer, and saw, to his amazement, that she was busy with a coat of his—an old coat, in the sleeve of which he had torn a great rent the day before, while he was dragging her and himself through some underwood in the forest. She—who loathed all womanly arts, who had often boasted to him that she hardly knew how to use a needle !

In moving nearer, he brushed against the shrubs, and she heard him. She turned her head, smiling. In the mingled light she looked like a little white ghost, she was so pale and her eyes so heavy. When she saw him, she raised her finger with a childish, aggrieved

air, and put it to her lips, rubbing it softly against them.

‘It does prick so!’ she said plaintively.

He came to sit beside her, his chest heaving.

‘Why do you do that—for me?’

She shrugged her shoulders and worked on without speaking. Presently she laid down her needle and surveyed him.

‘Where have you been all day? Have you eaten nothing, poor friend?’

He tried to remember.

‘I think not; I have been in the forest.’

A little quiver ran over her face; she pulled at her needle violently and broke the thread.

‘Finished!’ she said, throwing down the coat and springing up. ‘Don’t tell your tailor who did it! I am for perfection in all things—*à bas l’amateur!* Come in, it is supper-time past. I will go and hurry Madame Pyat. *Tu dois avoir une faim de loup.*’

He shook his head, smiling sadly.

‘I tell you, you *are* hungry, you *shall* be hungry!’ she cried, suddenly flinging her arm round his neck, and nestling her fair head against his shoulder. Her voice was half a sob.

‘Oh, so I am!—so I am!’ he said, with a wild emphasis, and would have caught her to him. But she slipped away and ran before him to the house, turning at the window with the sweetest, frankest gesture to bid him follow.

They passed the evening close together, she on a stool leaning against his knee, he reading aloud Alfred de Musset's *Nuit de Mai*. At one moment she was all absorbed in the verse, carried away by it; great battle-cry that it is! calling the artist from the miseries of his own petty fate to the lordship of life and nature as a whole; the next she had snatched the book out of his hands and was correcting his accent, bidding him speak after her, put his lips so. Never had she been so charming. It was the coaxing charm of the softened child that cannot show its penitence enough. Every now and then she fell to pouting because she could not move him to gaiety. But in reality his sad and passive gentleness, the mask of feelings which would otherwise have been altogether beyond his control, served him with her better than any gaiety could have done.

Gaiety! it seemed to him his heart was broken.

At night, after a troubled sleep, he suddenly woke, and sprang up in an agony. *Gone!* was she gone already? For that was what her sweet ways meant. Ah, he had known it all along!

Where was she? His wild eyes for a second or two saw nothing but the landscape of his desolate dream. Then gradually the familiar forms of the room emerged from the gloom, and there—against the further wall—she lay, so still, so white, so gracious! Her childish arm, bare to the elbow, was thrown round her head, her soft waves of hair made a

confusion on the pillow. After her long day of emotion she was sleeping profoundly. Whatever cruel secret her heart might hold, she was there still, his yet, for a few hours and days. He was persuaded in his own mind that her penitence had been the mere fruit of a compromise with herself, their month had still eight days to run, then—*adieu!* Art and liberty should reclaim their own. Meanwhile why torment the poor boy, who must any way take it hardly?

He lay there for long, raised upon his arm, his haggard look fixed on the sleeping form which by-and-by the dawn illuminated. His life was concentrated in that form, that light breath. He thought with repulsion and loathing of all that had befallen him before he saw her—with anguish and terror of those days and nights to come when he should have lost her. For in the deep stillness of the rising day there fell on him the strangest certainty of this loss. That gift of tragic prescience which was in his blood had stirred in him—he knew his fate. Perhaps the gift itself was but the fruit of a rare power of self-vision, self-appraisalment. He saw and cursed his own timid and ignorant youth. How could he ever have hoped to hold a creature of such complex needs and passions? In the pale dawn he sounded the very depths of self-contempt.

But when the day was up and Elise was chattering and flitting about the house as usual without a word of discord or parting, how was it possible to avoid reaction,

the re-birth of hope? She talked of painting again, and that alone, after these long days of sullen alienation from her art, was enough to bring the brightness back to their little *ménage* and to dull that strange second sight of David's. He helped her to set her palette, to choose a new canvas; he packed her charcoals, he beguiled some cold meat and bread out of Madame, and then before the heat they set out together for the Bas Bréan.

Just as they started he searched his pockets for a knife of hers which was missing, and thrusting his hand into a breast pocket which he seldom used, he brought out some papers at which he stared in bewilderment.

Then a shock went through him; for there was Mr. Gurney's letter, the letter in which the cheque for 600*l.* had been enclosed, and there was also that faded scrap of Sandy's writing which contained the father's last injunction to his son. As he held the papers he remembered—what he had forgotten for weeks—that on the morning of his leaving Manchester he had put them carefully into this breast pocket, not liking to leave things so interesting to him behind him, out of his reach. Never had he given a thought to them since! He looked down at them, half ashamed, and his eye caught the words:—*'I lay it on him now I'm dying to look after her. She's not like other children; she'll want it. Let him see her married to a decent man, and give her what's honestly hers. I trust it to him.'*

That little lad——’ and then came the fold of the sheet.

‘I have found the knife,’ cried Elise from the gate. ‘Be quick!’

He pushed the papers back and joined her. The day was already hot, and they hurried along the burning street into the shade of the forest. Once in the Bas Bréau Elise was not long in finding a subject, fell upon a promising one indeed almost at once, and was soon at work. This time there were to be no figures, unless indeed it might be a dim pair of woodcutters in the middle distance, and the whole picture was to be an impressionist dream of early summer, finished entirely out of doors, as rapidly and cleanly as possible. David lay on the ground under the blasted oak and watched her, as she sat on her camp-stool, bending forward, looking now up, now down, using her charcoal in bold energetic strokes, her lip compressed, her brow knit over some point of composition. The little figure in its pink cotton was so daintily pretty, so full of interest and wilful charm, it might well have filled a lover’s eye and chained his thoughts. But David was restless and at times absent.

‘Tell me what you know of that man Montjoie?’ he asked her at last, abruptly. ‘I know you disliked him.’

She paused, astonished.

‘Why do you ask? Dislike—I *detest and despise* him. I told you so.’

‘But what do you know of him?’ he persisted.

‘No good!’ she said quickly, going back to her work. Then a light broke upon her, and she turned on her stool, her two hands on her knees.

‘*Tiens!*—you are thinking of your sister. You have had news of her?’

A conscious half-remorseful look rose into her face.

‘No, I have had no news. I ought to have had a letter. I wrote, you remember, that first day here. Perhaps Louie has gone home already,’ he said, with constraint. ‘Tell me anyway what you know.’

‘Oh, he!—well, there is only one word for him—he is a *brute!*’ said Elise, drawing vigorously, her colour rising. ‘Any woman will tell you that. Oh, he has plenty of talent,—he might be anything. Carpeaux took him up at one time, got him commissions. Five or six years ago there was quite a noise about him for two or three Salons. Then people began to drop him. I believe he was the most mean, ungrateful animal towards those who had been kind to him. He drinks besides—he is over head and ears in debt, always wanting money, borrowing here and there, then locking his door for weeks, making believe to be out of town—only going out at night. As for his ways with women’—she shrugged her shoulders—‘Was your sister still sitting to him when we left, or was it at an end? Hasn’t your sister been sitting to him for his statue?’

She paused again and studied him with her shrewd, bright eyes.

He coloured angrily.

‘I believe so—I tried to stop it—it was no use.’

She laughed out.

‘No—I imagine she does what she wants to do. Well, we all do, *mon ami*! After all’—and she shrugged her shoulders again—‘I suppose she can do what I did?’

‘What *you* did!’

She went on drawing in sharp deliberate strokes; her breath came fast.

‘He met me on the stairs one night—it was just after I had taken the *atelier*. I knew no one in the house—I was quite defenceless there. He insulted me—I had a little walking-stick in my hand, my cousin had given me—I struck him with it across the face twice, three times—if you look close you will see the mark. You may imagine he tells fine stories of me when he gets the chance. *Oh! je m’en fiche!*’

The scorn of the last gesture was unmeasured.

‘*Canaille!*’ said David, between his teeth. ‘If you had told me this!’

Her expression changed and softened.

‘You asked me no questions after that quarrel we had in the Louvre,’ she said, excusing herself. ‘You will understand it is not a reminiscence one is exactly proud of; I did speak to Madame Cervin once——’

David said nothing, but sat staring before him into the far vistas of the wood. It seemed strange that so

great a smart and fear as had possessed him since yesterday, should allow of any lesser smart within or near it. Yet that scrap of tremulous writing weighed heavy. *Where* was Louie; why had she not written? So far he had turned impatiently away from the thought of her, reiterating that he had done his best, that she had chosen her own path. Now in this fragrant quiet of the forest the quick vision of some irretrievable wreck presented itself to him; he thought of Mr. Ancrum—of John—and a cold shudder ran through him. In it spoke the conscience of a lifetime.

Elise meanwhile laid aside her charcoal, began to dash in some paint, drew back presently to look at it from a distance, and then, glancing aside, suddenly threw down her brushes, and ran up to David.

She sat down beside him, and with a coaxing, childish gesture, drew his arm about her.

'*Tu me fais pitié, mon ami!*' she said, looking up into his face. 'Is it your sister? Go and find her—I will wait for you.'

He turned upon her, his black eyes all passion, his lips struggling with speech.

'My place is here,' he said. 'My life is here!'

Then, as she was silent, not knowing in her agitation what to say, he broke out:

'What was in your mind yesterday, Elise? what is there to-day? There is something—something I *will* know.'

She was frightened by his look. Never did fear

and grief speak more plainly from a human face. 'The great deep within had broken up.

'I was sorry,' she said, trembling, 'sorry to have hurt you. I wanted to make up.'

He flung her hand away from him with an impatient gesture.

'There was more than that!' he said violently; 'will you be like all the rest—betray me without a sign?'

'David!'

She bit her lip proudly. Then the tears welled up into her grey eyes, and she looked round at him—hesitated—began and stopped again—then broke into irrevocable confession.

'David!—Monsieur David!—how can it go on? *Voyons*—I said to myself yesterday—I am torturing him and myself—I *cannot* make him happy—it is not in me—not in my destiny. It must end—it must,—it *must*, for both our sakes. But then first,—first——'

'Be quiet!' he said, laying an iron hand on her arm. 'I knew it all.'

And he turned away from her, covering his face.

This time she made no attempt to caress him. She clasped her hands round her knees and remained quite still, gazing—yet seeing nothing—into the green depths which five minutes before had been to her a torturing ecstasy of colour and light. The tears which had been gathering fell, the delicate lip quivered.

Struck by her silence at last, he looked up—watched

her a moment—then he dragged himself up to her and knelt beside her.

‘Have I made you so miserable?’ he said, under his breath.

‘It is—it is—the irreparableness of it all,’ she answered, half sobbing. ‘No undoing it ever, and how a woman glides into it, how lightly, knowing so little!—thinking herself so wise! And if she has deceived herself, if she is not made for love, if she has given herself for so little—for an illusion—for a dream that breaks and must break—how dare the *man* reproach her, after all?’

She raised her burning eyes to him. The resentment in them seemed to be more than individual, it was the resentment of the woman, of her sex.

She stabbed him to the heart by what she said—by what she left unsaid. He took her little cold hand, put it to his lips—tried to speak.

‘Don’t,’ she said, drawing it away and hiding her face on her knees. ‘Don’t say anything. It is not you, it is God and Nature that I accuse.’

Strange, bitter word!—word of revolt! He lay on his face beside her for many minutes afterwards, tasting the bitterness of it, revolving those other words she had said—‘*an illusion—a dream that breaks—must break.*’ Then he made a last effort. He came close to her, laid his arm timidly round her shoulders, bent his cheek to hers.

‘Elise, listen to me a little. You say the debt is on

my side—that is true—true—a thousand times true ! I only ask you, *implore* you, to let me pay it. Let it be as you please—on what terms you please—servant or lover. All I pray for is to pay that debt, with my life, my heart.'

She shook her head softly, her face still hidden.

'When I am with you,' she said, as though the words were wrung out of her, 'I must be a woman. You agitate me, you divide my mind, and my force goes. There are both capacities in me, and one destroys the other. And I want—I *want* my art!'

She threw back her head with a superb gesture. But he did not flinch.

'You shall have it,' he said passionately, 'have it abundantly. Do you think I want to keep you for ever loitering here? Do you think I don't know what ambition and will mean? that I am only fit for kissing?'

He stopped almost with a smile, thinking of that harsh struggle to know and to have, in which his youth had been so far consumed night and day. Then words rushed upon him again, and he went on with a growing power and freedom.

'I never looked at a woman till I saw you!—never had a whim, a caprice. I have eaten my heart out with the struggle first for bread, then for knowledge. But when you came across me, then the world was all made new, and I became a new creature, your creature.'

He touched her face with a quick, tender hand, laid

it against his breast, and spoke so, bending piteously down to her, within reach of her quivering mouth, her moist eyes :—

‘Tell me this, Elise—answer me this! How can there be great art, great knowledge, only from the brain.—without passion, without experience? You and I have been *living* what Musset, what Hugo, what Shakespeare wrote,’ and he struck the little volume of Musset beside him. ‘Is not that worth a summer month? not worth the artist’s while? But it is nearly gone. You can’t wonder that I count the moments of it like a miser! I have had a *hard* life, and this has transfigured it. Whatever happens now in time or eternity, this month is to the good—for me and for you, Elise!—yes, for you, too! But when it is over,—see if I hold you back! We will work together—climb—wrestle, together. And on what terms you please,—mind that,—only dictate them. I deny your “illusion,” your “dream that breaks.” You *have* been happy! I dare to tell you so. But part now,—shirk our common destiny,—and you will indeed have given all for nothing, while I——’

His voice sank. She shook her head again, but as she drew herself gently away she was stabbed by the haggardness of the countenance, the pleading pathos of the eyes. His gust of speech had shaken her too—revealed new points in him. She bent forward quickly and laid her soft lips to his, for one light swift moment.

‘Poor boy!’ she murmured, ‘poor poet!’

‘Ah, that was enough!’ he said, the colour flooding his cheeks. ‘That healed—that made all good. Will you hide nothing from me, Elise—will you promise?’

‘Anything,’ she said with a curious accent, ‘anything—if you will but let me paint.’

He sprang up, and put her things in order for her. They stood looking at the sketch, neither seeing much of it.

‘I must have some more cobalt,’ she said wearily. ‘Look, my tube is nearly done.’

Yes, that was certain. He must get some more for her. Where could it be got? No nearer than Fontainebleau, alas! where there was a shop which provided all the artists of the neighbourhood. He was eagerly ready to go—it would take him no time.

‘It will take you between two and three hours, sir, in this heat. But oh, I am so tired, I will just creep into the fern there while you are away, and go to sleep. Give me that book and that shawl.’

He made a place for her between the spurs of a great oak-root, tearing the brambles away. She nestled into it, with a sigh of satisfaction. ‘Divine! Take your food—I want nothing but the air and sleep. *Adieu, adieu!*’

He stood gazing down upon her, his face all tender lingering and remorse. How white she was, how fragile, how shaken by this storm of feeling he had forced upon her! How could he leave her?

But she waved him away impatiently, and he went at last, going first back to the village to fetch his purse which was not in his pocket.

As he came out of their little garden gate, turning again towards the forest which he must cross in order to get to Fontainebleau, he became aware of a group of men standing in front of the inn. Two of them were the landscape artists already slightly known to him, who saluted him as he came near. The other was a tall fine-looking man, with longish grizzled hair, a dark commanding eye, the rosette of the Legion of Honour at his buttonhole, and a general look of irritable power. He wore a wide straw hat and holland overcoat, and beside him on the bench lay some artist's paraphernalia.

All three eyed David as he passed, and he was no sooner a few yards away than they were looking after him and talking, the new-comer asking questions, the others replying.

‘Oh, it is she!’ said the stranger impatiently, throwing away his cigar. ‘Auguste’s description leaves me no doubt of it, and the woman at the house in the Rue Chantal where I had the caprice to inquire one day, when she had been three weeks away, told me they were here. It is annoying. Something might have been made of her. Now it is finished. A handsome lad all the same!—of a rare type. *Non!*—*je me suis trompé—en devenant femme, elle n’a pas cessé d’être artiste!*’

The others laughed. Then they all took up their various equipments, and strolled off smoking to the forest. The man from Paris was engaged upon a large historical canvas representing an incident in the life of Diane de Poitiers. The incident had Diane's forest for a setting, but his trees did not satisfy him, he had come down to make a few fresh studies on the spot.

David walked his four miles to Fontainebleau, bought his cobalt, and set his face homewards about three o'clock. When he was halfway home, he turned aside into a tangle of young beechwood, parted the branches, and found a shady corner where he could rest and think. The sun was very hot, the high road was scorched by it. But it was not heat or fatigue that had made him pause.

So far he had walked in a tumult of conflicting ideas, emotions, terrors, torn now by this memory, now by that—his mind traversed by one project after another. But now that he was so near to meeting her again, though he pined for her, he suddenly and pitifully felt the need for some greater firmness of mind and will. Let him pause and think! Where *was* he with her?—what were his real, tangible hopes and fears? Life and death depended for him on these days—these few vanishing days. And he was like one of the last year's leaves before him, whirled helpless and will-less in the dust-storm of the road!

He had sat there an unnoticed time when the sound of some heavy carriage approaching roused him. From

his green covert he could see all that passed, and instinctively he looked up. It was the Barbizon *diligence* going in to meet the five o'clock train at Fontainebleau, a train which in these lengthening days very often brought guests to the inn. The *correspondance* had been only begun during the last week, and to the dwellers at Barbizon the afternoon *diligence* had still the interest of novelty. With the perception of habit David noticed that there was no one outside; but though the rough blinds were most of them drawn down he thought he perceived some one inside—a lady. Strange that anyone should prefer the stifling *intérieur* who could mount beside the driver with a parasol!

The omnibus clattered past, and with the renewal of the woodland silence his mind plunged heavily once more into the agonised balancing of hope and fear. But in the end he sprang up with a renewed alertness of eye and step.

Despair? Impossible!—so long as one had one's love still in one's arms—could still plead one's cause, hand to hand, lip to lip. He strode homewards—running sometimes—the phrases of a new and richer eloquence crowding to his lips.

About a mile from Barbizon, the path to the Bas Bréau diverges to the right. He sped along it, leaping the brambles in his path. Soon he was on the edge of the great avenue itself, looking across it for that spot of colour among the green made by her light dress.

But there was no dress, and as he came up to the

tree where he had left her, he saw to his stupefaction that there was no one there—nothing, no sign of her but the bracken and brambles he had beaten down for her some three hours before, and the trodden grass where her easel had been. Something showed on the ground. He stooped and noticed the empty cobalt-tube of the morning.

Of course she had grown tired of waiting and had gone home. But a great terror seized him. He turned and ran along the path they had traversed in the morning, making for the road ; past the inn which seemed to have been struck to sleep by the sun, past Millet's studio on the left, to the little overgrown door in the brick wall.

No one in the garden, no one in the little *salon*, no one upstairs ; Madame Pyat was away for the day, nursing a daughter-in-law. In all the house and garden there was not a sound or sign of life but the cat asleep on the stone step of the kitchen, and the bees humming in the acacias.

‘ Elise ! ’ he called, inside and out, knowing already, poor fellow, in his wild despair that there could be no answer—that all was over.

But there was an answer. Elise was no untaught heroine. She played her part through. There was her letter, propped up against the gilt clock on the sham marble *cheminée*.

He found it and tore it open.

‘ You will curse me, but after a time you will for-

give. I *could* not go on. Taranne found me in the forest, just half an hour after you left me. I looked up and saw him coming across the grass. He did not see me at first, he was looking about for a subject. I would have escaped, but there was no way. Then at last he saw me. He did not attack me, he did not persuade me, he only took for granted it was all over,—my Art! I must know best, of course; but he was sorry, for I had a gift. Had I seen the notice of my portrait in the ‘*Temps*,’ or the little mention in the ‘*Figaro*’? Oh, yes, Bréal had been very successful, and deserved to be. It was a brave soul, devoted to art, and art had rewarded her.

‘Then I showed him my sketch, trembling—to stop his talk—every word he said stabbed me. And he shrugged his shoulders quickly; then, as though recollecting himself, he put on a civil face all in a moment, and paid me compliments. To an amateur he is always civil. I was all white and shaking by this time. He turned to go away, and then I broke down. I burst into tears—I said I was coming back to the *atelier*—what did he mean by taking such a cruel, such an insolent tone with me? He would not be moved from his polite manner. He said he was glad to hear it; mademoiselle would be welcome; but just as though we were complete strangers. *He* who has befriended me, and taught me, and scolded me since I was fourteen! I could not bear it. I caught him by the arm. I told him he *should* tell me all he thought. Had I really talent?—a future?

‘Then he broke out in a torrent—he made me afraid

of him—yet I adored him! He said I had more talent than any other pupil he had ever had; that I had been his hope and interest for six years; that he had taught me for nothing—befriended me—worked for me, behind the scenes, at the Salon; and all because he knew that I must rise, must win myself a name, that when I had got the necessary technique I should make one of the poetical impressionist painters, who are in the movement, who sway the public taste. But I must give *all* myself—my days and nights—my thoughts, and brain, and nerves. Other people might have adventures and paint the better. Not I,—I was too highly strung—for me it was ruin. “*C’est un maître sévère—l’Art,*” he said, looking like a god. “*Avec celui-là on ne transige pas. Ah! Dieu, je le connais, moi!*” I don’t know what he meant; but there has been a tragedy in his life; all the world knows that.

‘Then suddenly he took another tone, called me *pauvre enfant*, and apologised. Why should I be disturbed? I had chosen for my own happiness, no doubt. What was fame or the high steep of art compared even with an *amour de jeunesse*? He had seen you, he said,—*une tête superbe—des épaules de lion!* I was a woman; a young handsome lover was worth more to me, naturally, than the drudgeries of art. A few years hence, when the pulse was calmer, it might have been all very well. Well! I must forgive him; he was my old friend. Then he wrung my hand, and left me.

‘Oh, David, David, I must go! I *must*. My life is imprisoned here with you—it beats its bars. Why did I ever let you persuade me—move me? And I should let you do it again. When you are there I am weak. I am no cruel adventuress, I can’t look at you and torture you. But what I feel for you is not love—no, no, it is not, poor boy! Who was it said “A love which can be tamed is no love”? But in three days—a week—mine had grown tame—it had no fears left. I am older than you, not in years, *mais dans l’âme*—there is what parts us.

‘Oh! I must go—and you must not try to find me. I shall be quite safe, but with people you know nothing about. I shall write to Madame Pyat for my things. You need have no trouble.

‘Very likely I shall pass you on the way, for if I hurry I can catch the *diligence*. But you will not see me. Oh, David, I put my arms round you! I press my face against you. I ask you to forgive me, to forget me, to work out your own life as I work out mine. It will soon be a dream—this little house—these summer days! I have kissed the chair you sat in last night, the book you read to me. *C’est déjà fini! Adieu! adieu!*’

He sat for long in a sort of stupor. Then that maddening thought seized him, stung him into life, that she had actually passed him, that he had seen her, not knowing. That little indistinct figure in the *intérieur*, that was she.

He sprang up, in a blind anguish. Pursuit! the *diligence* was slow, the trains doubtful, he might overtake her yet. He dashed into the street, and into the Fontainebleau road. After he had run nearly a mile, he plunged into a path which he believed was a short cut. It led through a young and dense oak wood. He rushed on, seeing nothing, bruising himself and stumbling. At last a projecting branch struck him violently on the temple. He staggered, put up a feeble hand, sank on the grass against a trunk, and fainted.

CHAPTER X

It was between five and six o'clock in the morning. In the Tuileries Gardens flowers, grass, and trees were drenched in dew, the great shadow of the Palace spread grey and cool over terraces and slopes, while beyond the young sun had already shaken off all cumbering mists, and was pouring from a cloudless sky over the river with its barges and swimming-baths, over the bridges and the quays, and the vast courts and façades of the Louvre. Yet among the trees the air was still exquisitely fresh, the sun still a friend to be welcomed. The light morning wind swept the open, deserted spaces of the Gardens, playing merrily with the dust, the leaves, the fountains. Meanwhile on all sides the stir of the city was beginning, mounting slowly and steadily like a swelling tone.

On a bench under one of the trees in the Champs-Élysées sat a young man asleep. He had thrown himself against the back of the bench, his cheek resting on the iron, one hand on his knee. It was David Grieve; the lad's look showed that his misery was still with him, even in sleep.

He was dreaming, letting fall here and there a

troubled and disconnected word. In his dream he was far from Paris—walking after his sheep among the heathery slopes of the Scout, climbing towards the grey smithy among the old mill-stones, watching the Red Brook slide by over its long, shallow steps of orange grit, and the Downfall oozing and trickling among its tumbled blocks. Who was that hanging so high above the ravine on that treacherous stone that rocked with the least touch? Louie—mad girl!—come back. Ah! too late—the stone rocks, falls; he leaps from block to block, only to see the light dress disappear into the stony gulf below. He cries—struggles—wakes.

He sat up, wrestling with himself, trying to clear his torpid brain. Where was he? His dream-self was still roaming the Scout; his outer eye was bewildered by these alleys, these orange-trees, these statues—that distant arch.

Then the hideous, undefined cloud that was on him took shape. Elise had left him. And Louie, too, was gone—he knew not where, save that it was to ruin. When he had arrived the night before at the house in the Rue Chantal, Madame Merichat could tell him nothing of Mademoiselle Delaunay, who had not been heard of. Then he asked, his voice dying in his throat before the woman's hard and cynical stare—the stare of one who found the chief savour of life in the misfortunes of her kind—he asked for his sister and the Cervins. The Cervins were staying at Sèvres with relations, and

were expected home again in a day or two ; Mademoiselle Louie ?—well, Mademoiselle Louie was not with them. Had she gone back to England ? *Mais non !* A trunk of hers was still in the Cervins' vestibule. Did Madame Merichat know anything about her ? the lad asked, forcing himself to it, his blanched face turned away. Then the woman shrugged her shoulders and spoke out.

If he really must know, she thought there was no doubt at all that where Monsieur Montjoie was, Mademoiselle Louie was too. Monsieur Montjoie had paid the arrears of his rent to the *propriétaire*, somehow or other, and had then made a midnight flitting of it so as to escape other creditors who were tired of waiting for his statue to be finished. He had got a furniture van there at night, and he and the driver and her husband between them had packed most of the things from the studio, and M. Montjoie had gone off in the van about one o'clock in the morning. But of course she did not know his address ! she said so half-a-dozen times a day to the persons who called, and it was as true as gospel. Why, indeed, should M. Montjoie let her or anyone else know, that he could help ? He had gone into hiding to keep honest people out of their money—that was what it meant.

Well, and the same evening Mademoiselle Louie also disappeared. Madame Cervin had been in a great way, but she and mademoiselle had already quarrelled violently, and madame declared that she had no fault

in the matter and that no one could be held responsible for the doings of such a minx. She believed that madame had written to monsieur. Monsieur had never received it? Ah, well, that was not surprising! No one could ever read madame's writing, though it made her temper very bad to tell her so.

Could he have Madame Cervin's address? Certainly. She wrote it out for him. As to his old room?—no, he could not go back to it.

Monsieur Dubois had lately come back, with some money apparently, for he had paid his *loyer* just as the landlord was going to turn him out. But he was not at home.

Then she looked her questioner up and down, with a cool, inhuman curiosity working in her small eyes. So M'selle Elise had thrown him over already? That was sharp work! As for the rest of her news, her pessimism was interested in observing his demeanour under it. Certainly he did not seem to take it gaily; but what else did he expect with his sister?—‘*Je vous demande!*’

The young man dropped his head and went out, shrinking together into the darkness. She called her husband to the door, and the two peered after him into the lamp-lit street, dissecting him, his mistress, and his sister with knifelike tongues.

David went away and walked up and down the streets, the quays, the bridges, hour after hour, feeling no fatigue, till suddenly, just as the dawn was coming on, he sank heavily on to the seat in the Champs-Élysées.

The slip with Madame Cervin's address on it dropped unheeded from his relaxing hand. His nervous strength was gone, and he had to sit and bear his anguish without the relief of frenzied motion.

Now, after his hour's sleep, he was somewhat revived, ready to start again—to search again; but where? whither? *Somewhere* in this vast, sun-wrapped Paris was Elise, waking, perhaps, at this moment and thinking of him with a smile and a tear. He *would* find her, come what would; he could not live without her!

Then into his wild passion of loss and desire there slipped again that cold, creeping thought of Louie—ruined, body and soul—ruined in this base and dangerous Paris, while he still carried in his breast that little scrap of scrawled paper! And why? Because he had flung her to the wolves without a thought, that he and Elise might travel to their goal unchecked. ‘*My God!*’

The sense of some one near him made him look up. He saw a girl stopping near the seat whom in his frenzy he for an instant took for Louie. There was the same bold, defiant carriage, the same black hair and eyes. He half rose, with a cry.

The girl gave a quick, coarse laugh. She had been hurrying across the Avenue towards the nearest bridge when she saw him; now she came up to him with a hideous jest. David saw her face full, caught the ghastly suggestions of it—its vice, its look of mortal illness wrecking and blurring the cheap prettiness it had once possessed, and beneath all else the fierceness of the

hunted creature. His whole being rose in repulsion ; he waved her away, and she went, still laughing. But his guilty mind went with her, making of her infamy the prophecy and foretaste of another's.

He hurried on again, and again had to rest for faintness' sake, while the furies returned upon him. It seemed as though every passer-by were there only to scourge and torture him ; or, rather, out of the moving spectacle of human life which began to flow past him with constant increasing fulness, that strange selective poet-sense of his chose out the figures and incidents which bore upon his own story and worked into his own drama, passing by the rest. A group of persons presently attracted him who had just come apparently from the Rive Gauche, and were making for the Rue Royale. They consisted of a man, a woman, and a child. The child was a tiny creature in a preposterous feathered hat as large as itself. It had just been put down to walk by its father, and was dragging contentedly at its mother's hand, sucking a crust. The man had a bag of tools on his shoulder and was clearly an artisan going to work. His wife's face was turned to him and they were talking fast, lingering a little in the sunshine like people who had a few minutes to spare and were enjoying them. The man had the blanched, unwholesome look of the city workman who lives a sedentary life in foul air, and was, moreover, undersized and noways attractive, save perhaps for the keen amused eyes with which he was listening to his wife's chatter.

The great bell of Notre-Dame chimed in the distance. The man straightened himself at once, adjusted his bag of tools, and hurried off, nodding to his wife.

She looked after him a minute, then turned and came slowly along the alley towards the bench where David sat, idly watching her. The heat was growing steadily, the child was heavy on her hand, and she was again clearly on the way to motherhood. The seat invited her, and she came up to it.

She sat down, panting, and eyed her neighbour askance, detecting at once how handsome he was, and how unshorn and haggard. Before he knew where he was, or how it had begun, they were talking. She had no shyness of any sort, and, as it seemed to him, a motherly, half-contemptuous indulgence for his sex, as such, which fitted oddly with her young looks. Very soon she was asking him the most direct questions, which he had to parry as best he could. She made out at once that he was a foreigner and in the book trade, and then she let him know by a passing expression or two that naturally she understood why he was lounging there in that plight at that hour in the morning. He had been keeping gay company, of course, and had but just emerged from some nocturnal orgie or other. And then she shrugged her strong shoulders with a light, pitiful air, as though marvelling once more for the thousandth time over the stupidity of men who would commit these idiocies, would waste their money and health in them, say what women would.

Presently he discovered that she was giving him advice of different kinds, counselling him above all to find a good wife who would work and save his wages for him. A decent marriage was in truth an economy, though young men would never believe it.

David could only stare at her in return for her counsels. The difference between his place at that moment in the human comedy and hers was too great to be explained; it called only for silence or a stammering commonplace or two. Yet for a few moments the neighbourhood of her and her child was pleasant to him. She had a good comely head, which was bare under the sun, a little shawl crossed upon her ample bust, and a market-basket on her arm. The child was playing in the fine gravel at her feet, pausing every now and then to study her mother's eye with a furtive gravity, while the hat fell back and made a still more fantastic combination than before with the pensive little face.

Presently, tired of her play, she came to stand by her mother's knee, laying her head against it.

'*Mon petit ange! que tu es gentille!*' said the mother in a low, rapid voice, pressing her hand on the child's cheek. Then, turning back to David, she chattered on about the profit and loss of married life. All that she said was steeped in prose—in the prose especially of sous and francs; she talked of rents, of the price of food, of the state of wages in her husband's trade. Yet every here and there came an exquisite

word, a flash. It seemed that she had been very ill with her first child. She did not mince matters much even with this young man, and David gathered that she had not only been near dying, but that her illness had made a moral epoch in her life. She was laid by for three months; work was slack for her husband; her own earnings, for she was a skilled embroideress working for a great linen-shop in the Rue Vivienne, were no longer forthcoming. Would her husband put up with it, with the worries of the baby, and the *ménage*, and the sick wife, and that sharp pinch of want into the bargain, from which during two years she had completely protected him?

‘I cried one day,’ she said simply; ‘I said to him, “You’re just sick of it, ain’t you? Well, I’m going to die. Go and shift for yourself, and take the baby to the *Enfants Trouvés*. *Alors*——”’

She paused, her homely face gently lit up from within. ‘He is not a man of words—Jules. He told me to be quiet, called me *petite sotte*. “Haven’t you slaved for two years?” he said. “Well, then, lie still, can’t you?—*faut b’en que chacun prenne son tour!*”’

She broke off, smiling and shaking her head. Then glancing round upon her companion again, she resumed her motherly sermon. That was the good of being married; that there was some one to share the bad times with, as well as the good.

‘But perhaps,’ she inquired briskly, ‘you don’t

believe in being married? You are for *l'union libre*?'

She spoke like one touching on a long familiar question—as much a question indeed of daily life and of her class as those other matters of wages and food she had been discussing.

A slow and painful red mounted into the Englishman's cheek.

'I don't know,' he said stupidly. 'And you?'

'No, no!' she said emphatically, twice, nodding her head. 'Oh, I was brought up that way. My father was a Red—an Anarchist—a great man among them; he died last year. He said that liberty was everything. It made him mad when any of his friends accepted *l'union légale*—for him it was a treason. He never married my mother, though he was faithful to her all his life. But for me——' she paused, shaking her head slowly. 'Well, I had an elder sister—that says everything. *Faut pas en parler*; it makes me melancholy, and one must keep up one's spirits when one is like this. It is three years since she died; she was my father's favourite. When they buried her—she died in the hospital—I sat down and thought a little. It was abominable what she had suffered, and I said to myself, "Why?"'

The child swayed backward against her knee, so absorbed was it in its thumb and the sky, and would have fallen but that she caught it with her housewife's hand, being throughout mindful of its slightest movement,

“ ‘Why?’ I said. ‘She was a good creature—a bit foolish perhaps, but she would have worked the shoes off her feet to please anybody. And they had treated her—but like a dog! It bursts one’s heart to think of it, and I said to myself,—*le mariage c’est la justice!* it is nothing but that. It is not what the priests say—oh! not at all. But it strikes me like that—*c’est la justice*; it is nothing but that!’

And she looked at him with the bright fixed eyes of one whose thoughts are beyond their own expressing. He interrupted her, wondering at the harsh rapidity of his own voice. ‘But if it is the woman who will be free?—who will have no bond?’

Her expression changed, became shrewd, inquisitive, personal.

‘Well, then!’ she said with a shrug, and paused. ‘It is because one is ignorant, you see, or one is bad—*on peut toujours être une coquine!* And one forgets—one thinks one can be always young, and love is all pleasure—and it is not true! one gets old—and there is the child—and one may die of it.’

She spoke with the utmost simplicity, yet with a certain intensity. Evidently she had a natural pride in her philosophy of life, as though in a possession of one’s own meaning and elaborating. She had probably expressed it often before in much the same terms, and with the same verbal hitches and gaps.

The young fellow beside her rose hastily, and bade her good morning. She looked mildly sur-

prised at such an abrupt departure, but she was not offended.

‘Good day, citizen,’ she said, nodding to him. ‘I disturb you?’

He muttered something and strode away.

How much time had that wasted of this irrecoverable day that was to set him on Elise’s track once more! The first post had been delivered by this time. Elise must either return to her studio or remove her possessions; anyhow, sooner or later the Merichats must have information. And if they were forbidden to speak, well, then they must be bribed.

That made him think of money, and in a sudden panic he turned aside into a small street and examined his pockets. Nearly four napoleons left, after allowing for his debt to Madame Pyat, which must be paid that day. Even in his sick, stunned state of the evening before, when he was at last staggering on again, after his fall, to the Fontainebleau station, he had remembered to stop a Barbizon man whom he came across and give him a pencilled message for the deserted madame. He had sent her the Rue Chantal address, there would be a letter from her this morning. And he must put her on the watch too—Elise could not escape him long.

But he must have more money. He looked out for a stationer’s shop, went in and wrote a letter to John, which he posted at the next post-office.

It was an incoherent scrawl, telling the lad to change

the cheque he enclosed in Bank of England notes and send them to the Rue Chantal, care of Madame Merichat. He was not to expect him back just yet, and was to say to any friend who might inquire that he was still detained.

That letter, with the momentary contact it involved with his Manchester life, brought down upon him again the thought of Louie. But this time he flung it from him with a fierce impatience. His brain, indeed, was incapable of dealing with it. Remorse? rescue? there would be time enough for that by-and-by. Meanwhile—to find Elise!

And for a week he spent the energies of every thought and every moment on this mad pursuit. Of these days of nightmare he could afterwards remember but a few detached incidents here and there.

He recollected patrols up and down the Rue Chantal; talks with Madame Merichat; the gleam in her eyes as he slipped his profitless bribes into her hand; visits to Taranne's *atelier*, where the *concierge* at last grew suspicious and reported the matter within; and finally an interview with the artist himself, from which the English youth emerged no nearer to his end than before, and crushed under the humiliation of the great man's advice. He could vaguely recall the long pacings of the Louvre; the fixed scrutiny of face after face; vain chases; ignominious retreats; and all the wretched stages of that slow descent into a bottomless despair!

At last there was a letter—the long-expected letter to Madame Merichat, directing the removal of Mademoiselle Delaunay's possessions from the Rue Chantal. It was written by a certain M. Pimodan, who did not give his address, but who declared himself authorised by Mademoiselle Delaunay to remove her effects, and named a day when he would himself superintend the process and produce his credentials. David passed the time after the arrival of this letter in a state of excitement which left him hardly master of his actions. He had a room at the top of a wretched little hotel close to the Nord station, but he hardly ate or slept. The noises of Paris were agony to him night and day; he lived in a perpetual nausea of mind and body, hardly able at times to distinguish between the images of the brain and the impressions coming from without.

Before the day came, a note was brought to him from the Rue Chantal. It was from M. Pimodan, and requested an interview.

‘I should be glad to see you on Mademoiselle Delaunay's behalf. Will you meet me in the Garden of the Luxembourg in front of the central pavilion, at three o'clock to-morrow?—GUSTAVE PIMODAN.’

Before the hour came David was already pacing up and down the blazing gravel in front of the Palace. When M. Pimodan came the Englishman in an instant recognised the cousin—the lanky fellow with the spectacles, who had injured his eyes by reading.

As soon as he had established this identification—and the two men had hardly exchanged half-a-dozen sentences before the flashing inward argument was complete—a feeling of enmity arose in his mind, so intense that he could hardly keep himself still, could hardly bring his attention to bear on what he or his companion was saying. He had been brought so low that, with anyone else, he must have broken into appeals and entreaties. With this man—No!

As for M. Pimodan, the first sight of the young Englishman had apparently wrought in him also some degree of nervous shock; for the hand which held his cane fidgetted as he walked. He had the air of a person, too, who had lately gone through mental struggle; the red rims of the eyes under their large spectacles might be due either to chronic weakness or to recent sleeplessness.

But however these things might be, he took a perfectly mild tone in which David's sick and irritable sense instantly detected the note of various offensive superiorities—the superiority of class and the superiority of age to begin with. He said in the first place that he was Mademoiselle Delamay's relative, and that she had commissioned him to act for her in this very delicate matter. She was well aware—had been aware from the first day—that she was watched, and that M. Grieve was moving heaven and earth to discover her whereabouts. She did not, however, intend to be discovered; let him take that for granted. In her view

all was over—their relation was irrevocably at an end. She wished now to devote herself wholly and entirely to her art, without disturbance or distraction from any other quarter whatever. Might he, under these circumstances, give M. Grieve the advice of a man of the world, and counsel him to regard the matter in the same light?

David walked blindly on, playing with his watch-chain. In the name of God whom and what was this fellow talking about? At the end of ten minutes' discourse on M. Pimodan's part, and of a few rare monosyllables on his own, he said, straightening his young figure with a nervous tremor:

‘What you say is perfectly useless—I shall find her.’

Then a sudden angry light leapt into the cousin's eyes.

‘You will *not* find her!’ he said, drawing a sharp breath. ‘It shows how little you know her, after all—compared with those who——No matter! Oh, you can persecute and annoy her! No one doubts that. You can stand between her and all that she now cares to live for—her art. But you can do nothing else; and you will not be allowed to do that long, for she is not alone, as you seem to think. She will be protected. There are resources, and we shall employ them!’

The cousin had gone beyond his commission. David guessed as much. He did not believe that Elise had set this man on to threaten him. What a fool! But he

merely said with a sarcastic dryness, endeavouring the while to steady his parched lips and his eyelids swollen with weariness :

‘ *A la bonne heure!*—employ them. Well, sir, you know, I believe, where Mademoiselle Delaunay is. I wish to know. You will not inform me. I therefore pursue my own way, and it is useless for me to detain you any longer.’

‘ Know where she is!’ cried the other, a triumphant flash passing across his sallow student’s face; ‘ I have but just parted from her.’

But he stopped. As a physician, he was accustomed to notice the changes of physiognomy. Instinctively he put some feet of distance between himself and his companion. Was it agony or rage he saw?

But David recovered himself by a strong effort.

‘ Go and tell her, then, that I shall find her,’ he said with a shaking voice. ‘ I have many things to say to her yet.’

‘ Absurd!’ cried the other angrily. ‘ Very well, sir, we know what to expect. It only remains for us to take measures accordingly.’

And drawing himself up he walked quickly away, looking back every now and then to see whether he were followed or no.

‘ Supposing I did track him,’ thought David vaguely, ‘ what would he do?’ Summon one of the various *gardiens* in sight?

He had, however, no such intention. What could

it have ended in but a street scuffle? Patience! and he would find Elise for himself in spite of that prater.

Meanwhile he descended the terrace, and threw himself, worn out, upon the first seat, to collect his thoughts again.

Oh, this summer beauty:—this festal moment of the great city! Palace and Garden lay under the full June sun. The clipped trees on the terraces, statues, alleys, and groves slept in the luminous dancing air. All the normal stir and movement of the Garden seemed to have passed to-day into the leaping and intermingling curves of the fountains; the few figures passing and repassing hardly disturbed the general impression of heat and solitude.

For hours David sat there, head down, his eyes on the gravel, his hands tightly clasped between his knees. When he rose at last it was to hurry down the Rue de Seine and take the nearest bridge and street northwards to the Quartier Montmartre. He had been dreaming too long! and yet so great by now was his confusion of mind that he was no nearer a fresh plan of operations than when the cousin left him.

When he arrived at Madame Merichat's *loge* it was to find that no new development had occurred. Elise's possessions were still untouched; neither she nor M. Pimodan had given any further sign. The *concierge*, however, gave him a letter which had just arrived for him. Seeing that it bore the Manchester postmark, he thrust it into his pocket unread.

When he entered the evil-smelling passage of his

hotel, a *garçon* emerged from the restaurant, dived into the *salle de lecture*, and came out with an envelope, which he gave to the Englishman. It had been left by a messenger five minutes before monsieur arrived. David took it, a singing in his ears; mounted to the first landing, where the gas burnt at midday, and read it.

‘Gustave tells me you would not listen to him. Do you want to make me curse our meeting? Be a man and leave me to myself! While I know that you are on the watch I shall keep away from Paris—*voilà tout*. I shall eat my heart out,—I shall begin to hate you,—you will have chosen it so. Only understand this: I will *never* see you again, for both our sakes, if I can help it. Believe what I say—believe that what parts us is a fate stronger than either of us, and go! Oh! you men talk of love—and at bottom you are all selfish and cruel. Do you want to break me more than I am already broken? Set me free!—will you kill both my youth and my art together?’

He carefully refolded the letter and put it into its envelope. Then he turned and went downstairs again towards the street. But the same frowsy waiter who had given him his letter was on the watch for him. In the morning monsieur had commanded some dinner. Would he take it now?

The man’s tone was sulky. David understood that he was not considered a profitable customer of the hotel—that, considering his queer ways, late hours, and small

spendings, they would probably be glad to be rid of him. With a curious submission and shrinking he followed the man into the stifling restaurant and sat down at one of the tables.

Here some food was brought to him, which he tried to eat. But in the midst of it he was seized with so great a loathing, that he suddenly rose, so violently as to upset a plate of bread beside him, and make a waiter spring forward to save the table itself. He pushed his way to the glass-door into the street, totally unconscious of the stir his behaviour was causing among the stout women in bonnets and the red-faced men with napkins tucked under their chins who were dining near, fumbled at the handle, and tottered out.

'*Quel animal !*' said the enraged *dame du comptoir*, who had noticed the incident. 'Marie !'—this to the sickly girl who sat near with the books in front of her, 'enter that plate, and charge it high. To-morrow I shall raise the price of his room. One must really finish with him. *C'est un fou !*'

Meanwhile David, revived somewhat by the air, was already in the Boulevard, making for the Opéra and the Rue Royale. It was not yet seven, the Salon would be still open. The distances seemed to him interminable—the length of the Rue Royale, the expanse of the Place de la Concorde, the gay and crowded ways of the Champs-Élysées. But at last he was mounting the stairs and battling through the rooms at the top. He

looked first at the larger picture which had gained her the *mention honorable*. It was a study of factory girls at their work, unequal, impatient, but full of a warm inventive talent—full of *her*. He knew its history—the small difficulties and triumphs of it, the adventures she had gone through on behalf of it—by heart. That fair-haired girl in the corner was studied from herself; the tint of the hair, the curve of the cheek were exact. He strained his eyes to look, searching for this detail and that. His heart said farewell—that was the last, the nearest he should ever come to her on this earth! Next year? Ah, he would give much to see her pictures of next year, with these new perceptions she had created in him.

He stood a minute before the other picture, the portrait—a study from one of her comrades in the *atelier*—and then he wound his way again through the thronged and suffocating rooms, and out into the evening.

The excessive heat of the last few days was about to end in storm. A wide tempestuous heaven lay beyond the Arc de Triomphe; the red light struck down the great avenue and into the faces of those stepping westwards. The deep shade under the full-leaved trees—how thinly green they were still against the sky that day when she vanished from him beside the arch and their love began!—was full of loungers and of playing children; the carriages passed and repassed in the light. So it had been, the enchanting

never-ending drama, before this spectator entered—so it would be when he had departed.

He turned southwards and found himself presently on the Quai de la Conférence, hanging over the river in a quiet spot where few people passed.

His frenzy of will was gone, and his last hope with it. Elise had conquered. Her letter had brought him face to face with those realities which, during this week of madness, he had simply refused to see. He could pit himself against her no longer. When it came to the point he had not the nerve to enter upon a degrading and ignoble conflict, in which all that was to be won was her hatred or her fear. That, indeed, would be the last and worst ruin, for it would be the ruin, not of happiness or of hope, but of love itself, and memory.

He took out her letter and re-read it. Then he searched for some of the writing materials he had bought when he had written his last letter to Manchester, and, spreading a sheet on the parapet of the river wall, he wrote :

‘Be content. I think now—I am sure—that we shall never meet again. From this moment you will be troubled with me no more. Only I tell you for the last time that you have done ill—irrevocably ill. For what you have slain in yourself and me is not love or happiness, but *life* itself—the life of life !’

Foolish, incoherent words, as they seemed to him, but he could find no better. Confusedly and darkly they expressed the cry, the inmost conviction of his

being. He could come no nearer at any rate to that desolation at the heart of him.

But now what next? Manchester?—the resumption and expansion of his bookseller's life—the renewal of his old friendships—the pursuit of money and of knowledge?

No. That is all done. The paralysis of will is complete. He cannot drive himself home, back to the old paths. The disgust with life has sunk too deep—the physical and moral collapse of which he is conscious has gone too far.

'Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

There, deep in the fibre of memory lie these words, and others like them—the typical words of a religion which is still in some sense the ineradicable warp of his nature, as it had been for generations of his forefathers. His individual resources of speech, as it were, have been overpassed; he falls back upon the inherited, the traditional resources of his race.

He looked up. A last gleam was on the Invalides—on the topmost roof of the Corps Législatif; otherwise the opposite bank was already grey, the river lay in shade. But the upper air was still aglow with the wide flame and splendour of the sunset; and beneath, on the bridges and the water and the buildings, how clear and gracious was the twilight!

'Who shall deliver me?' *'Deliver thyself!'* One instant, and the intolerable pressure on this shrinking

point of consciousness can be lightened, this hunger for sleep appeased! Nothing else is possible—no future is even conceivable. His life in flowering has exhausted and undone itself, so spendthrift has been the process.

So he took his resolve. Then, already calmed, he hung over the river, thinking, reviewing the past.

Six weeks—six weeks only!—yet nothing in his life before matters or counts by comparison. For this mood of deadly fatigue the remembrance of all the intellectual joys and conquests of the last few years has no savour whatever. Strange that the development of one relation of life—the relation of passion—should have been able so to absorb and squander the power of living! His fighting, enduring capacity, compared with that of other men, must be small indeed. He thinks of himself as a coward and a weakling. But neither the facts of the present nor the face of the future are altered thereby.

The relation of sex—in its different phases—as he sees the world at this moment, there is no other reality. The vile and hideous phase of it has been present to him from the first moment of his arrival in these Paris streets. He thinks of the pictures and songs at the ‘Trois Rats’ from which in the first delicacy and flush of passion he had shrunk with so deep a loathing; of the photographs and engravings in the shops and the books on the stalls; of some of those pictures he had passed, a few minutes before, in the Salon; of that girl’s face in

the Tuileries Gardens. The animal, the beast in human nature, never has it been so present to him before ; for he has understood and realised it while loathing it, has been admitted by his own passion to those regions of human feeling where all that is most foul and all that is most beautiful are generated alike from the elemental forces of life. And because he had loved Elise so finely and yet so humanly, with a boy's freshness and a man's energy, this animalism of the great city had been to him a perpetual nightmare and horror. His whole heart had gone into Regnault's cry—into Regnault's protest. For his own enchanted island had seemed to him often in the days of his wooing to be but floating on the surface of a ghastly sea, whence emerged all conceivable shapes of ruin, mockery, terror, and disease. It was because of the tremulous adoration which filled him from the beginning that the vice of Paris had struck him in this tragical way. At another time it might have been indifferent to him, might even have engulfed him.

But he !—he had known the best of passion ! He laid his head down on the wall, and lived Barbizon over again—day after day, night after night. Now for the first time there is a pause in the urging madness of his despair. All the pulses of his being slacken ; he draws back as it were from his own fate, surveys it as a whole, separates himself from it. The various scenes of it succeed each other in memory, set always—incomparably set—in the spring green of the forest, or under a

charmed moonlight, or amid the flowery detail of a closed garden. Her little figure flashes before him—he sees her gesture, her smile; he hears his own voice and hers; recalls the struggle to express, the poverty of words, the thrill of silence, and that perpetual and exquisite recurrence to the interpreting images of poetry and art. But no poet had imagined better, had divined more than they in those earliest hours had *lived!* So he had told her, so he insisted now with a desperate faith.

But, poor soul! even as he insists, the agony within rises, breaks up, overwhelms the picture. He lives again through the jars and frets of those few burning days, the growing mistrust of them, the sense of jealous terror and insecurity—and then through the anguish of desertion and loss. He writhes again under the wrenching apart of their half-fused lives—under this intolerable ache of his own wound.

This the best of passion! Why his whole soul is still athirst and ahungred. Not a single craving or it has been satisfied. What is killing him is the sense of a thwarted gift, a baffled faculty—the faculty of self-spending, self-surrender. This, the best?

Then the mind fell into a whirlwind of half-articulate debate, from the darkness of which emerged two scenes—fragments—set clear in a passing light of memory.

That workman and his wife standing together before the day's toil—the woman's contented smile as her look clung to the mean departing figure.

And far, far back in his boyish life—Margaret sitting beside 'Lias in the damp autumn dawn, spending on his dying weakness that exquisite, ineffable passion of tenderness, of pity.

Ah! from the very beginning he had been in love with loving. He drew the labouring breath of one who has staked his all for some long-coveted gain, and lost.

Well!—Mr. Ancrum may be right—the English Puritan may be right—'sin' and 'law' may have after all some of those mysterious meanings his young analysis had impetuously denied them—he and Elise may have been only dashing themselves against the hard facts of the world's order, while they seemed to be transcending the common lot and spurning the common ways. What matter now! A certain impatient defiance rises in his stricken soul. He has made shipwreck of this one poor opportunity of life—confessed! now let the God behind it punish, if God there be. '*The rest is silence.*' With Elise in his arms, he had grasped at immortality. Now a stubborn, everlasting 'Nay' possesses him. There is nothing beyond.

He gathered up his letter, folded it, and put it into the breast-pocket of his coat. But in doing so his fingers touched once more the ragged edges of a bit of frayed paper.

Louie!

Through all these half-sane days and nights he had never once thought of his sister. She had passed out

of his life—she had played no part even in the nightmares of his dreams.

But now!—while that intense denial of any reality in the universe beyond and behind this masque of life and things was still vibrating through his deepest being, it was as though a hand gently drew aside a curtain, and there grew clear before him, slowly effacing from his eyes the whole grandiose spectacle of buildings, sky, and river, that scene of the past which had worked so potently both in his childish sense and in Reuben's maturer conscience—the bare room, the iron bed, the dying man, one child within his arm, the other a frightened baby beside him.

It was frightfully clear, clearer than it had ever been in any normal state of brain, and as his mind lingered on it, unconsciously shaping, deepening its own creation, the weird impression grew that the helpless figure amid the bedclothes rose on its elbow, opened its cavernous eyes, and looked at him face to face, at the son whose childish heart had beat against his father's to the last. The boy's tortured soul quailed afresh before the curse his own remorse called into those eyes.

He hung over the water pleading with the phantom—defending himself. Every now and then he found that he was speaking aloud; then he would look round with a quick, piteous terror to see whether he had been heard or no, the parched lips beginning to move again almost before his fear was soothed.

All his past returned upon him, with its obligations, its fetters of conscience and kinship, so slowly forged, so often resisted and forgotten, and yet so strong. The moment marked the first passing away of the philtre, but it brought no recovery with it.

'My God! my God! I tried, father—I tried. But she is lost, lost—as I am!'

Then a thought found entrance and developed. He walked up and down the quay, wrestling it out, returning slowly and with enormous difficulty, because of his physical state, to some of the normal estimates and relations of life.

At last he dragged himself off towards his hotel. He must have some sleep, or how could these hours that yet remained be lived through—his scheme carried out?

On the way he went into a shop still open on the boulevard. When he came out he thrust his purchase into his pocket, buttoned his coat over it, and pursued his way northwards with a brisker step.

CHAPTER XI

Two days afterwards David stood at the door of a house in the outskirts of the Auteuil district of Paris. The street had a half-finished, miscellaneous air; new buildings of the villa type were mixed up with old and dingy houses standing in gardens, which had been evidently overtaken by the advancing stream of Paris, having once enjoyed a considerable amount of country air and space.

It was at the garden gate of one of these older houses that David rang, looking about him the while at the mean irregular street and the ill-kept side-walks with their heaps of cinders and refuse.

A powerfully built woman appeared, scowling, in answer to the bell. At first she flatly refused the new-comer admission. But David was prepared. He set to work to convince her that he was not a Paris creditor, and, further, that he was well aware M. Montjoie was not at home, since he had passed him on the other side of the road, apparently hurrying to the railway station, only a few minutes before. He desired simply to see *madame*. At this the woman's expression changed somewhat. She showed, however, no immediate signs of

letting him in, being clearly chosen and paid to be a watch-dog. Then David brusquely put his hand in his pocket. Somehow he must get this harridan out of the way at once! The same terror was upon him that had been upon him now for many days and nights—of losing command of himself, of being no more able to do what he had to do.

The creature studied him, put out a greedy palm, developed a smile still more repellent than her brutality, and let him in.

He found himself in a small, neglected garden; in front of him, to the right, a wretched, weather-stained house, bearing every mark of poverty and dilapidation, while to the left there stretched out from the house a long glass structure, also in miserable condition—a sculptor's studio, as he guessed.

His guide led him to the studio-door. Madame was there a few minutes ago. As they approached, David stopped.

'I will knock. You may go back to the house. I am madame's brother.'

She looked at him once more, reluctant. Then, in the clearer light of the garden, the likeness of the face to one she already knew struck her with amazement; she turned and went off, muttering.

David knocked at the door; there was a movement within, and it was cautiously opened.

'*Monsieur est sorti.*—You!'

The brother and sister were face to face.

David closed the door behind him, and Louie retreated slowly, her hands behind her, her tall figure drawing itself up, her face setting into a frowning scorn.

‘*You!*—what are you here for? We have done with each other!’

For answer David went up to a stove which was feebly burning in the damp, cheerless place, put down his hat and stick, and bent over it, stretching out his hands to the warmth. A chair was beside it, and on the chair some scattered bits of silk and velvet, out of which Louie was apparently fashioning a hat.

She stood still, observing him. She was in a loose dress of some silky Oriental material, and on her black hair she wore a red close-fitting cap with a fringe of golden coins dropping lightly and richly round her superb head and face.

‘What is the matter with you?’ she asked him grimly, after a minute’s silence. ‘She has left you—that’s plain!’

The young man involuntarily threw back his head as though he had been struck, and a vivid colour rushed into his cheek. But he answered quickly:

‘We need not discuss my affairs. I did not come here to speak of them. They are beyond mending. I came to see—before I go—whether there is anything I can do to help you.’

‘Much obliged to you!’ she cried, flinging herself down on the edge of a rough board platform, whereon stood a fresh and vigorous clay-study, for which she had

just been posing, to judge from her dress. Beyond was the Mænad. And in the distance loomed a great block of marble, upon which masons had been working that afternoon.

‘I am *greatly* obliged to you!’ she repeated mockingly, taking the crouching attitude of an animal ready to attack. ‘You are a pattern brother.’

Her glowing looks expressed the enmity and contempt she was at the moment too excited to put into words.

David drew his hand across his eyes with a long breath. How was he to get through it, this task of his, with this swollen, aching brain and these trembling limbs? Louie *must* let him speak; he bitterly felt his physical impotence to wrestle with her.

He went up to her slowly and sat down beside her. She drew away from him with a violent movement. But he laid his hand upon her knee—a shaking hand which his impatient will tried in vain to steady.

‘Louie, look at me!’ he commanded.

She did so unwillingly, but the proud repulsion on her lip did not relax.

‘Well, I dare say you look pretty bad. Whose fault is it? everybody else but you knew what the creature was worth. Ask anybody!’

The lad’s frame straightened and steadied. He took his hand from her knee.

‘Say that kind of thing again,’ he said calmly, ‘and I walk straight out of that door, and you set eyes on

me for the last time. That would be what you want, I dare say. Al I wish to point out is, that you would be a great fool. I have not come here to-day to waste words, but to propose something to your advantage—your money-advantage,’ he repeated deliberately, looking round the dismal building with its ill-mended gaps and rents, and its complete lack of the properties and appliances to which the humblest modern artist pretends. ‘To judge from what I heard in Paris, and what I see, money is scarce here.’

His piteous sudden wish to soften her, to win a kind word from her, from anyone, had passed away. He was beginning to take command of her as in the old days.

‘Well, maybe we are hard up,’ she admitted slowly. ‘People are such brutes and won’t wait, and a sculptor has to pay out for a lot of things before he can make anything at all. But that statue will put it all right,’ and she pointed behind her to the *Manad*. ‘It’s me—it’s the one you tried to put a stopper on.’

She looked at him darkly defiant. She was leaning back on one arm, her foot beating with the trick familiar to her. For reckless and evil splendour the figure was unsurpassable.

‘When he sells that,’ she went on, seeing that he did not answer, ‘and he will sell it in a jiffy—it is the best he’s ever done—there’ll be heaps of money.’

David smiled.

‘For a week perhaps. Then, if I understand this

business aright—I have been doing my best, you perceive, to get information, and M. Montjoie seems to be better known than one supposed to half Paris—the game will begin again.’

‘Never you mind,’ she broke in, breathing quickly. ‘Give me my money—the money that belongs to me—and let me alone.’

‘On one condition,’ he said quietly. ‘That money, as you remember, is in my hands and at my disposal.’

‘Ah! I supposed you would try to grab it!’ she cried.

Even he was astonished at her violence—her insolence. The demon in her had never been so plain, the woman never so effaced. His heart dropped within him like lead, and his whole being shrank from her.

‘Listen to me!’ he said, seizing her strongly by the hand, while a light of wrath leapt into his changed and bloodshot eyes. ‘This man will desert you; in a year’s time he will have tired of you; what’ll you do then?’

‘Manage for myself, thank you! without any canting interference from you. I have had enough of that.’

‘And fall again,’ he said, releasing her, and speaking with a deliberate intensity; ‘fall again—from infamy to infamy!’

She sprang up.

‘Mind yourself!’ she cried.

Miserable moment! As he looked at her he felt that that weapon of his old influence with her which,

poor as it was, he had relied on in the last resort all his life, had broken in his hand. His own act had robbed it of all virtue. That pang of 'irreparableness' which had smitten Elise smote him now. All was undone—all was done!

He buried his face in his hands an instant. When he lifted it again, she was standing with her arms folded across her chest, leaning against an iron shaft which supported part of the roof.

'You had better go!' she said, still in a white heat. 'Why you ever came I don't know. If you won't give me that money, I shall get it somehow.'

Suddenly, as she spoke, everything—the situation, the subject of their talk, the past—seemed to be wiped out of David's brain. He stared round him helplessly. Why were they there—what had happened?

This blankness lasted a certain number of seconds. Then it passed away, and he painfully recovered his identity. But the experience was not new to him—it would recur—let him be quick.

This time a happier instinct served him. He, too, rose and went up to her.

'We are a pair of fools,' he said to her, half bitterly, half gently; 'we reproach and revile each other, and all the time I am come to give you not only what is yours, but all—all I have—that it may stand between you and—and worse ruin.'

'Ruin!' she said, throwing back her head and catching at the word; 'speak for yourself! If I am

Montjoie's mistress, Elise Delaunay was yours. Don't preach. It won't go down.'

'I have no intention of preaching—don't alarm yourself,' he replied quietly, this time controlling himself without difficulty. 'I have only this to say. On the day when you become Montjoie's *wife*, all our father's money—all the six hundred pounds Mr. Gurney paid over to me in January, shall be paid to you.'

She started, caught her breath, tried to brazen it out.

'What is this idiocy for?' she asked coldly. 'What does marrying matter to you?'

He sank down again on the chair by the stove, being, indeed, unable to stand.

'Perhaps I can't tell you,' he said, after a pause, shading his face from her with his hand; 'perhaps I could not make plain to myself what I feel. But this I know—that this man with whom you are living here is a man for whom nobody has a good word. I want to give you a hold over him. But first!—stop a moment,'—he dropped his hand and looked up eagerly, 'will you leave him—leave him at once? I could arrange that.'

'Make your mind easy,' she said shortly; 'he suits me—I stay. I went with him, well, because I was dull—and because I wanted to make you smart for it, if you're keen to know!—but if you think I am anxious to go home, to be cried over by Dora and lectured by you, you're vastly mistaken. I can manage him! I

have my hold on him—he knows very well what I am worth to him.’

She threw her head back superbly against the iron shatt, putting one arm round it and resting her hot cheek against it as though for coolness.

‘Why should we argue?’ he said sharply—after a wretched silence. ‘I didn’t come for that. If you won’t leave him I have only this to say. On the day he marries you, if the evidence of the marriage is satisfactory to an English lawyer I have discovered in Paris and whose address I will give you, six hundred pounds will be paid over to you. It is there now, in the lawyer’s hands. If not, I go home, and the law does not compel me to hand you over one farthing.’

She was silent, and began to pace up and down.

‘Montjoie despises marriage,’ she said presently.

‘Try whether he despises money too,’ said David, and could not for the life of him keep the sarcastic note out of his voice.

She bit her lip.

‘And when, if it is done, must this precious thing be settled?’

‘If your marriage does not take place within a month, Mr. O’Kelly—I will leave you his address,’ he put his hand into his pocket—‘has orders to return the money——’

‘To whom?’ she inquired, struck by his sudden break.

‘To me, of course,’ he said slowly. ‘Is it perfectly

plain? do you understand? Now, then, listen. I have inquired what the law is—you will have to be married both at the mairie and by the chaplain at the British embassy.'

She stopped suddenly in her walk and confronted him.

'If I am married at all,' she said abruptly, 'I shall be married as a Catholic.'

'A Catholic!' David stared at her. She enjoyed his astonishment.

'Oh, I have had that in my mind for a long time,' she said scornfully. 'There is a priest at that church with the steps, you know, near that cemetery place on the hill, who is very much interested in me indeed. He speaks English. I used to go to confession. Madame Cervin told me all about it, and how to do it; I did it exact! Oh, if I am to be married, that will make it plain sailing enough. It was awkward—while——'

She broke off and sat down again beside him, pondering and smiling as he had seen her do in Manchester, when she had the prospect of a new dress or some amusement that excited her.

'How have you been able to think about such things?' he asked her, marvelling.

'Think about them! What was the good or that? It's the churches I like, and the priests. Now there is something to see in the Paris churches, like the Madeleine—worth a dozen St. Damian's,—you may tell Dora that. The flowers and the dresses and the music—they are something like. And the priests——'

She smiled again, little meditative smiles, as though she were recalling her experiences.

‘Well, I don’t know that there’s much about them,’ she said at last; ‘they’re queer, and they’re awfully clever, and they want to manage you, of course.’

She stopped, quite unable to express herself any more fully. But it was evident that the traditional relation of the Catholic priest to his penitent had been to her a subject of curiosity and excitement—that she would gladly know more of it.

David could hardly believe his ears. He sat lost at first in the pure surprise of it, in the sense of Louie’s unlikeness to any other human creature he had ever seen. Then a gleam of satisfaction arose. He had heard of the hold on women possessed by the Catholic Church, and maintained by her marvellous, and on the whole admirable system of direction. For himself, he would have no priests of whatever Church. But his mind harboured none of the common Protestant rules and shibboleths. In God’s name, let the priests get hold of this sister of his!—if they could—when he——.

‘Marry this man, then!’ he said to her at last, breaking the silence abruptly, ‘and square it with the Church, if you want to.’

‘Oh, indeed!’ she said mockingly. ‘So you have nothing to say against my turning Catholic? I should like to see uncle Reuben’s face.’

Her voice had the exultant mischief of a child. It

was evident that her spirits were rising, that her mood towards her brother was becoming more amiable.

‘Nothing,’ he said dryly, replying to her question.

Then he got up and looked for his hat. She watched him askance. ‘What are you going for? I could get you some tea. *He* won’t be in for hours.’

‘I have said what I had to say. These’—taking a paper from his pocket and laying it down, ‘are all the directions, legal and other, that concern you, as to the marriage. I drew them up this morning, with Mr. O’Kelly. I have given you his address. You can communicate with him at any time.’

‘I can write to you, I suppose?’

‘Better write to him,’ he said quietly, ‘he has instructions. He seemed to me a good sort.’

‘Where are you going?’

‘Back to Paris, and then—home.’

She placed herself in his way, so that the sunny light of the late afternoon, coming mostly from behind her, left her face in shadow.

‘What’ll you do without that money?’ she asked abruptly.

He paused, getting together his answer with difficulty.

‘I have the stock, and there is something left of the sixty pounds uncle Reuben brought. I shall do.’

‘He’ll muddle it all,’ she said roughly. ‘What’s the good?’

And she folded her arms across her with the recklessness of one quite ready and eager, if need be, to fight her own battle, with her own weapons, in her own way.

‘Get Mr. O’Kelly to keep it, if you can persuade him, and draw it by degrees. I’d have made a trust of it, if it had been enough; but it isn’t. Twenty-four pounds a year: that’s all you’d get, if we tied up the capital.’

She laughed. Evidently her acquaintance with Montjoie had enlarged her notions of money, which were precise and acute enough before.

‘He spends that in a supper when he’s in cash. I’ll be curious to see whether, all in a lump, it’ll be enough to make him marry me. Still, he is precious hard up: he don’t stir out till dark, he’s so afraid of meeting people.’

‘That’s my hope,’ said David heavily, hardly knowing what he said. ‘Good-bye.’

‘Hope!’ she re-echoed bitterly. ‘What d’you want to tie me to him for, for good and all?’

And, turning away from him, she stared, frowning, through the dingy glass door into the darkening garden. In her mind there was once more that strange uprising swell of reaction—of hatred of herself and life.

Why, indeed? David could not have answered her question. He only knew that there was a blind instinct in him driving him to this, as the best that remained open—the only *amende* possible for what had

been so vilely done by himself, by her, and by the man who had worked out her fall for a mere vicious whim. There was no word in any mouth, it seemed to him, of his being in love with her.

There were all sorts of whirling thoughts in his mind—fragments cast up by the waves of desolate experience he had been passing through—inarticulate cries of warning, judgment, pain. But he could put nothing into words.

‘Good-bye, Louie!’

She turned and stood looking at him.

‘What made you get ill?’ she inquired, eyeing him. His thirsty heart drank in the change of tone.

‘I don’t sleep,’ he said hurriedly. ‘It’s the noise. The Nord station is never quiet. Well, mind you’ve got to bring that off. Keep the papers safe. Good-bye, for a long time.’

‘I can come over when I want?’ she said half sullenly.

‘Yes,’ he assented, ‘but you won’t want.’

He drew her by the hand, with a solemn tremulous feeling, and kissed her on the cheek. He would have liked to give her their father’s dying letter. It was there, in his coat-pocket. But he shrank from the emotion of it. No, he must go. He had done all he could.

She opened the door for him, and took him to the garden-gate in silence.

‘When I’m married,’ she said shortly, ‘if ever I

am—Lord knows!—you can tell uncle Reuben and Dora?’

‘Yes. Good-bye.’

The gate closed behind him. He went away, hurrying towards the Auteuil station.

When he landed again in the Paris streets, he stood irresolute.

‘One more look,’ he said to himself, ‘one more.’

And he turned down the Rue Chantal. There was the familiar archway, and the light shining behind the porter’s door. Was her room already stripped and bare, or was the broken glass—poor dumb prophet!—still there, against the wall?

He wandered on through the lamp-lit city and the crowded pavements. Elise—the wraith of her—went with him, hand in hand, ghost with ghost, amid this multitude of men. Sometimes, breaking from this dream-companionship, he would wake with terror to the perception of his true, his utter loneliness. He was not made to be alone, and the thought that nowhere in this great Paris was there a single human being to whose friendly eye or hand he might turn him in his need, swept across him from time to time, contracting the heart. Dora—Mr. Ancrum—if they knew, they would be sorry.

Then again indifference and blankness came upon him, and he could only move feebly on, seeing everything in a blur and mist. After these long days and nights of sleeplessness, semi-starvation, and terrible

excitement, every nerve was sick, every organ out of gear.

The lights of the Tuileries, the stately pile of the Louvre, under a grey driving sky.—There would be rain soon—ah, there it came! the great drops hissing along the pavement. He pushed on to the river, careless of the storm, soothed, indeed, by the cool dashes of rain in his face and eyes.

The Place de la Concorde seemed to him as day, so brilliant was the glare of its lamps. To the right, the fairyland of the Champs-Élysées, the trees tossing under the sudden blast; in front, the black trench of the river. On, on—let him see it all—gather it all into his accusing heart and brain, and then at a stroke blot out the inward and the outward vision, and ‘cease upon the midnight with no pain’!

He walked till he could walk no more; then he sank on a dark seat on the Quai Saint-Michel, cursing himself. Had he no nerve left for the last act—was that what this delay, this fooling meant? Coward!

But not here! not in these streets—this publicity! Back—to the little noisome room. There lock the door, and make an end!

On the way northward, at the command of a sudden caprice, he sat down outside a blazing café on the Boulevard and ordered absinthe, which he had never tasted. While he waited he looked round on the painted women, on the men escorting them, on the loungers with their newspapers and cigars, the shouting, super-

cilious waiters. But all the little odious details of the scene escaped him; he felt only the touchingness of his human comradeship, the yearning of a common life, bruised and wounded but still alive within him.

Then he drank the stuff they gave him, loathed it, paid and staggered on. When he reached his hotel he crept upstairs, dreading to meet any of the harsh-faced people who frowned as he passed them. He had done abject things these last three days to conciliate them—tipped the waiter, ordered food, not that he might eat it but that he might pay for it, bowed to the landlady—all to save the shrinking of his sore and quivering nerves. In vain! It seemed to him that since that last look from Elise as she nestled into the fern, there had been no kindness for him in human eyes—save, perhaps, from that woman with the child.

As he dragged himself up to his fourth floor, the stimulant he had taken began to work upon his starved senses. The key was in his door, he turned it and fell into his room, while the door, with the key still in it, swung to behind him. Guiding himself by the furniture, he reached the only chair the room possessed—an arm-chair of the commonest and cheapest hotel sort, which, because of the uncertainty of its legs, the *femme de chambre* had propped up against the bed. He sat down in it and his head fell back on the counterpane. There was much to do. He had to write to John about the sale of his stock and the payment of his debts. He had to put his father's letter into an envelope for Louie,

to send all the papers and letters he had on him and a last message to Mr. Ancrum, and then to post these letters, so that nothing private might fall into the hands of the French police, who would, of course, open his bag.

While these thoughts were rising in him, a cloud came over the brain, bringing with it, as it seemed, the first moment of ease which had been his during this awful fortnight. Before he yielded himself to it he thrust his hand into his coat-pocket with a sudden vague anxiety to feel what was there. But even as he withdrew his fingers they relaxed; a black object came with them, and fell unheeded, first on his knee, then on to a coat lying on the floor between him and the window.

A quarter of an hour afterwards there was a stir and voices on the landing outside. Some one knocked at the door of No. 139. No answer. 'The key is in the door. *Ouvrez donc!*' cried the waiter, as he ran downstairs again to the restaurant, which was still crowded. The visitor opened the door and peeped in. Some quick words broke from him. He rushed in and up to the bed. But directly the heavy feverish breathing of the figure in the chair caught his ear his look of sudden horror relaxed, and he fell back, looking at the sleeping youth.

It was a piteous sight he saw! Exhaustion, helplessness, sorrow, physical injury, and moral defeat, were written in every line of the poor drawn face and shrunken form. The brow was furrowed, the breathing hard, the mouth dry and bloodless. Upon the mind

of the new-comer, possessed as it was with the image of what David Grieve had been two short months before, the effect of the spectacle was presently overwhelming.

He fell on his knees beside the sleeper. But as he did so, he noticed the black thing on the floor, stooped to it, and took it up. That it should be a loaded revolver seemed to him at that moment the most natural thing in the world, little used as he personally was to such possessions. He looked at it carefully, took out the two cartridges it contained, put them into one pocket and the revolver into the other.

Then he laid his arm round the lad's neck.

‘David!’

The young man woke directly and sat up, shaking with terror and excitement. He pushed his visitor from him, looking at him with defiance. Then he slipped his hand inside his coat and sprang up with a cry.

‘David!—dear boy—dear fellow!’

The voice penetrated the lad's ear. He caught his visitor and dragged him forward to the light. It fell on the twisted face and wet eyes of Mr. Ancrum. So startling was the vision, so poignant were the associations which it set vibrating, that David stood staring and trembling, struck dumb.

‘Oh, my poor lad! my poor lad! John wanted me to come yesterday, and I delayed. I was a selfish wretch. Now I will take you home.’

David fell again upon his chair, too feeble to speak, too feeble even to weep, the little remaining colour ebbing

from his cheeks. The minister used all his strength, and laid him on the bed. Then he rang and made even the callous and haughty madame, who was presently summoned, listen to and obey him while he sent for brandy and a doctor, and let the air of the night into the stifling room.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME

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